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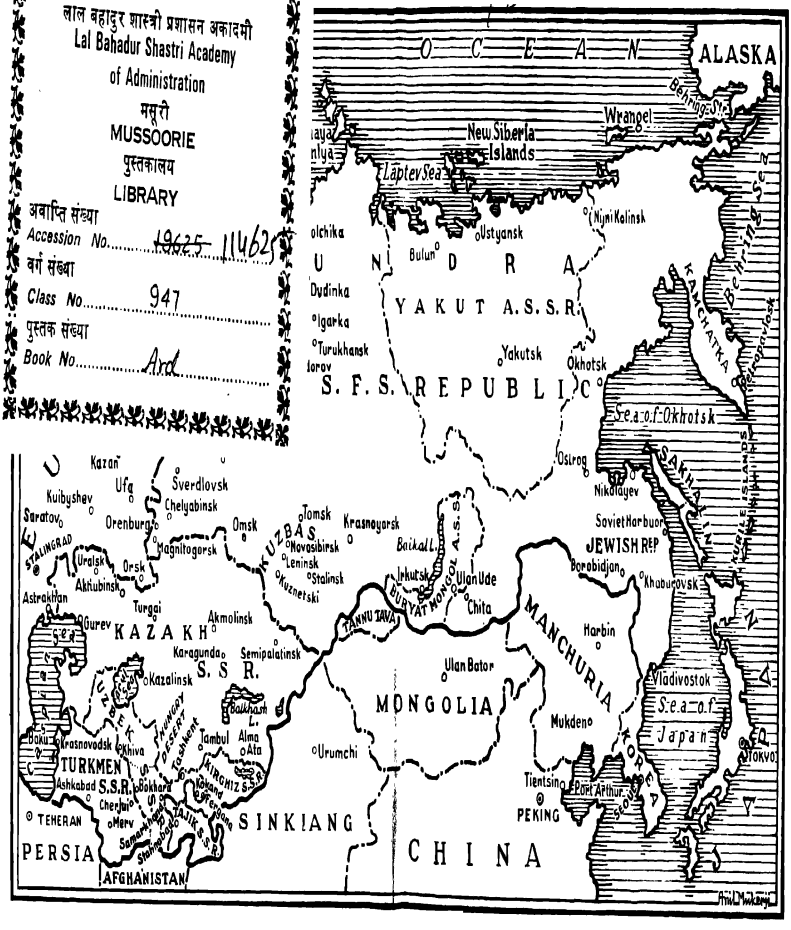

THE SOVIET EAST

A STORY OF THE MAKING OF MAN

BY

L. G. ARDNHCAS

WITH A FOREWORD BY

DR. DHIRENDRANATH SEN, M.A., Ph.D.

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Published by S. C. Guha B.SC., from Saraswaty Library, Calcutta and Printed by S. N. Guha Ray, B.A., at Sree Saraswaty Press Ltd., 32, Upper Circular Road, Calcutta

CONTENTS

FOREWORD	*By* Dr. Dhirendranath Sen, M.A., Ph.D.		iii
INTRODUCTION	... ...		1
CHAPTER	I.	A PUZZLE SOLVED	5
CHAPTER	II.	AS NATURE MADE IT	11
CHAPTER	III.	IN THE FEN OF CENTURIES	18
CHAPTER	IV.	THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION	28
CHAPTER	V.	THE PROBLEM OF NATIONALITIES ...	33
CHAPTER	VI.	THE STRATEGY OF THE CAMPAIGN ...	43
CHAPTER	VII.	THE BATTLEGROUND OF TURKESTAN ...	52
CHAPTER	VIII.	THE REVOLUTION IN PROCESS	65
CHAPTER	IX.	LIVING HAND OF THE PARTY	73
CHAPTER	X.	UNFOLDING TACTICS OF THE REVOLUTION	79
CHAPTER	XI.	TURKESTAN GOES SOCIALIST	91
CHAPTER	XII.	BUILDING SOCIALIST SOCIETY	98
CHAPTER	XIII.	SCIENCE IN THE SERVICE OF MAN ...	111
CHAPTER	XIV.	TRUSTEESHIP UNDER SOCIALISM ...	134

FOREWORD

For years it had been the deliberate and consistent policy of the Capitalistic Powers throughout the world to foster an attitude of hostility towards the Soviet Union and its great experiment in social and moral rehabilitation or to black out news about that Socialist state. The reason is obvious. The Soviet system was considered a challenge to the pretensions of capitalist democracies or democratic plutocracies not only in its interpretation of history but by its positive achievements through collective endeavour scientifically planned and executed. There has, however, been some change in that policy since the U.S.S.R.'s participation in the joint Allied front against the two European partners of the Axis in June, 1941, thanks to Hitler's desperate gamble in the East. As a result the world has now come to know more of the Soviets, their attitude towards life, their treatment of nationalities and their contributions to planning alike in war and in peace than has hitherto been made accessible.

A considerable mass of literature bearing on these subjects has recently reached the hands of eager and inquisitive readers. And yet the Soviet Union's courageous handling of vast, complicated and almost formidable problems in its border republics or regions, particularly in Asia, has not been properly and effectively publicised. Many of these republics or regions had long been characterised by economy of a primitive type and fanatical traditions of nomadic life. It is the fascinating story of the amazing achievements of the Soviet system in these hitherto neglected regions that has been presented in the following pages. In twenty years' time—and what is twenty years in the lifetime of a State, great or small?—the leaders and organisers of the Soviets have changed the entire aspect of things. They have succeeded in giving the peoples concerned a sense of dignity and bringing them together upon a common platform of service and devotion to a great common cause. The solutions of the problems in the Asiatic republics or regions of the USSR which

have so far been attempted are not without their lessons for us in this country.

I welcome this book as an objective and dispassionate study of that great and thrilling drama of human liberation which the Soviets and their leaders have so boldly and with such spectacular success projected in a relatively unknown quarter of the globe. The author does not give an exhaustive story. He admits it himself. But I have not the slightest doubt that there is enough material in these pages which will give us all food for thought. I congratulate the author.

DHIRENDRANATH SEN

INTRODUCTION

THE great lie sedulously spread by imperialists for the last twentyfive years is that the Russian experiment in founding a Socialist federation of States has been a failure and a prolonged and ruthless process of unmitigated barbarity. "Bolshevik" became the same catchword of omnibus abuse as "heretic" had come to be during the days of the Inquisition. The ceaseless propaganda of lies carried on in concert by the Capitalist Press had to a great extent succeeded in presenting Soviet Russia as a bogey of terror to the ignorant working class and also to the petty bourgeoisie whose sources of easy livelihood Marxist Socialism seeks to transform into honourable livelihood. In India, for example, the majority of genuine and ardent fighters against British Imperialism developed a horror of Bolshevism that undoubtedly afforded great pleasure to British capitalists. For between British capitalist domination and Indian capitalist domination there is a distinction but no essential difference, and a working agreement can any day be struck up by removing the distinction and exploiting the Indian masses in common.

Nemesis has not been merciful to these untruthful gentry. The reply has been given by the events of this war with excruciating irony. Western Europe, the foster-child of Great Britain and France, was knocked out by the first blow of the knuckles of Nazi Germany. Even France went down in the first round. Britain reeled and bled and was saved from sharing France's fate by Hitler's incomprehensible decision not to invade the island. If Soviet Russia had not absorbed the entire shock of Hitler's terrible army, there is little doubt that the imperial edifice of Britain would have been reduced to rubble, that Britain herself would have had to find a location in Canada and that France would have remained for an indefinite period a subordinate agricultural province of the Greater German Reich. There is nothing more ironical than that the "barbarian Bolsheviks", so consistently the butt of Winston

Churchill's vehement abuse in the past, should save Britain's freedom from extinction when all had looked very black. Mr. Churchill, of course, hopes to turn the laugh upon Josef Stalin by having the latter pull the British chestnut—i.e., Britain's colonial empire—out of the fire. Well, let us see. Hitler apparently had similar hopes in 1939.

We are truly and intensely interested in the future of the British Empire, particularly in that of India as still a part of it. It does not, however, come into our present scope of discourse except to furnish comparison and contrasts. We are amazed at the miracle called the U.S.S.R., its inexhaustible manpower and resources. Everyone knows how Great Britain has to depend not only on her extensive empire but on Allied countries for essential food and munitions and for the defence of her homeland, too. Of the dependence of demilitarised India and her half-fed billions vegetating under the protection of the British ruling class on the mercies of foreign countries little need be said here. But look at the U.S.S.R. Twentyfive years ago Russia was the despair of the civilised world of the West. Today she is her saviour and to-morrow she can well be her redeemer.

How has this miracle been possible? Thirty years ago Russia was a land of absolute monarchs and feudal landlords with well nigh absolute powers—and also a land of millions of ignorant, oppressed, poor people carrying on their shoulders the burden of sub-human standards of living and centuries of maltreatment. The pigmies of yesterday have emerged as the giants of today. While the "advanced" nations of the world, after three centuries of colonial exploitation and two of industrial supremacy, have not been able to give their toiling masses anything like prosperity, the U.S.S.R. has succeeded in giving them more in about a quarter of a century. Who made this miracle possible?

The answer is simple: the workers and peasants of the U.S.S.R. The October Revolution of 1917 placed the power of the State in the hands of the proletariat of Russia. Before that it had been a polyglot empire, ruled by a monarch and an aristocracy

of European origin. Three-fourths of this empire was in Asia and comprised diverse nationalities and races professing diverse faiths and speaking diverse languages. These peoples differed from one another in everything except their common primitiveness and their abysmal backwardness. The revolution that shook and turned upside down the European part of the Russian Empire, touched the nomads and tillers of its Asiatic part very little, if at all. The Great Russians, i.e., the fellows from Europe, with all their shortcomings were gods in comparison with the primitive Asians. Had they so minded, they could have had socialism at home and imperialism abroad and thereby earned the gratitude of Chamberlains and Churchills. They could have become fat on the labours of Asiatics, like the British who prosper on the labour of Indians and Africans.

But they did not go that way. On the other hand, they gave up all imperialist designs, put an end to the policy of economic exploitation and admitted the pastoral Asiatic at once into full equality with cultured Westerner. The Bolshevik Revolution dealt the legend of racial inequality and the luxury of racial prejudice a mortal blow, thereby earning the curses of Hitler and Churchill alike. It, however, enabled Stalin to demonstrate that "the liberated non-European nations, once having been drawn into the channel of Soviet development, are no less capable than the European nations of promoting a truly progressive culture and civilisation." It is these Asians, barbarians of yesterday and heroes of to-day, whose industrial and human resources have turned the scales in the present war in favour of the democracies.

India has every need to know the story of this miracle of human regeneration. Her ancient culture and social order have broken down under British domination. It is most likely that her agricultural civilisation would not anyhow have survived the onslaught of steam and electricity even if she had not come under alien control. The tragedy of India is that though her old order has collapsed, it has not been replaced by a more modern social order, not to speak of the best possible social order. Her handicrafts and manufactures have vanished without a corres-

ponding innovation in the shape of industries. Her factories are located in the shores of Britain and all she possesses to-day is the plough-share and 400 millions of backward men and women, undernourished, ignorant and easy victims to exploitation and epidemics. Religion has come to acquire nearly all the sentimental force of race and we find people of the same race, promiscuously scattered all over the country, staging a political demand for so-called "national" separation without a natural or historical national area.

Yet this unhappy land must be redeemed. What has been possible in Soviet Asia should also be possible in India. Only the right methods must be employed. It is here that the example of Soviet Asia is particularly apposite to India. Soviet Asia offers a solution of many of India's basic problems—of poverty and ignorance, and of minorities and religions. Only we require the application of the Marxist technique and an unhesitating reliance on the sociological and technological sciences. Facts constitute the most incontrovertible evidence. To the facts, as found in Soviet Asia of yesterday and today, the following pages are devoted.

No attempt has been made in this book to make out a detailed inventory of the up-to-date position of the Soviet Asian republics or to draw a comparative table of their phenomenal industrial and cultural progress. These tasks have been tackled in a masterly way by writers like R.A. Davies and J. A. Steiger and George Borodin who have combined first-hand experience and expert knowledge in their recent works, *Soviet Asia* and *Soviet and Tsarist Siberia* respectively. Nor has any attempt been made to expose the campaign of lies in the English Press with which the Indian public has been fed for years. This is simply an account of how the Bolshevik Revolution caught the slumbering East and smelted the human ore to produce sterling gold. The author tapped all the sources of information available to him—they are unfortunately far from exhaustive—and has formed his own conclusions, for which he accepts full responsibility. The sources drawn upon have been duly acknowledged.

L. G. ARDNIHCAS.

CHAPTER I

A PUZZLE SOLVED

FOR over two decades the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, for short the Soviet Union, and popularly miscalled Soviet Russia, was a puzzle to many and the butt of the most vigorous abuse of many others throughout the world. The former were ignorant of what the Soviet regime aimed to achieve and in what manner to achieve it, and how much it had actually achieved. They were confused by the incessant lies sedulously spread by the opponents of Communism, namely, the capitalists and their associates, the imperialists. But truth, like murder, will out. Little by little the scattered bits of the Soviet puzzle came together, and gradually the layman came to understand some of the principles underlying the Soviet State. I say "some" advisedly ; for the majority of foreign admirers of the Soviet Union have a small acquaintance with the ideological doctrine on which the Communist regime is founded. As for the methods, they were neither fully known nor reasonably well understood, for the Communist Party, or the Bolsheviks, who till 1937 exercised a dictatorship over the State as representing the proletariat, have been very shy of publicity. Consequently, many actualities remained hidden from the knowledge of the world beyond the U.S.S.R. Conflicting reports about what was going on were rife. What emerged from all this welter of lies, half-lies, truth and exaggeration was a hazy picture of something gigantic being attempted, on the success or failure of which rested the chances of emancipation of the oppressed masses of mankind.

Thus the U.S.S.R. changed in the estimation of the public from being barbarous and tyrannical into a big and rather incomprehensible experiment in Socialist statecraft. That it was doing quite a lot for the economic and social uplift of millions of workers and peasants by abolishing Capitalism came to be conceded, particularly as the rise of the Nazi military power in Germany invited a sharp comparison. But doubts were entertained of its ability to hold

its own in the possible event of attack by Germany or Japan or by both. The Soviet Government kept its military preparations a complete secret, and this fact encouraged mistaken notions. When Hitler at last invaded Russia in 1941 there were pessimistic forecasts galore. The Germans, it was believed by Anglo-American military experts with melancholy, and by German experts with gleeful anticipation, would cut through Russia "like a knife through butter."

But as the war wore on, it was found that this "butter" was lined with an armour of impregnable steel. If the Soviet Union was strong in peace, it has proved even stronger in war. Those who had scoffed or doubted have remained to admire. The German Army had devastated the Ukraine, in which most of the industries of the Union were known to be situated. Modern wars being largely mechanised, it was feared that the destruction of these industries would seriously weaken Soviet resistance. But what happened seemed a miracle. Soviet war production not only did not suffer but actually increased. Newer and newer armies adequately equipped with improved armaments were poured into the battle and history's greatest military victories were won. All the world wondered and sought for an explanation.

The unity of the U.S.S.R., composed of so many different nationalities, races and religions, has held in the teeth of military aggression as it had held earlier against foreign intervention, intrigue and propaganda. Such armed might and such brilliant performance could not have come out of hasty improvisation but must have been the result of a carefully thought-out and gigantic plan. This realisation has been a strong incentive to curiosity. We now know that propaganda had lied about the U.S.S.R. and that the Soviet Government, always envisaging the prospect of hostile attack by imperialist Powers singly or in combination, had even encouraged some amount of misrepresentation. The Finnish War of 1939-40, for example, was, as Hitler bitterly remarked in 1943 when he had begun to feel the Red Army's pommelling, the biggest camouflage in history. The Soviet policy of secretiveness was

called for by the necessity of coping with a hostile world. The outside world was filled with capitalist propaganda that the Soviet Union was planning an armed world revolution. The Soviet Union really had no plan of the kind, but the policy of the Comintern and the views held by Trotsky and his supporters unfortunately provided a slender basis to this great lie. So the Soviet Government had to dissemble its war production policy which it had evolved only as a defensive measure. Had the nature of industrialisation in the U.S.S.R., particularly in Soviet Asia, been prematurely disclosed, there is no doubt that a second international blockade and intervention would have resulted and that, instead of seeing the Capitalist and Socialist States combined against the Fascists, we would have seen a Capitalist-Fascist combination against the Soviet Union. That necessity, therefore, was real. Happily, the international situation has changed. The U.S.S.R. no longer needs to be suspicious and secretive. The only valid argument in international politics so far has been the argument *ad baculum,* and the Red Army is now recognised to be the greatest land army in the world. Power for its own sake has never been admired in the Soviet Union. It is only the means to securing freedom and happiness to mankind, to ensure the greatest benefit to all the people.

Now that the fog of propaganda has lifted, one can see more of the truth about the Soviet State. We know now that ever since the First Five-Year Plan (1928) the U.S.S.R. had been preparing to meet foreign invasion. The giant industries of the Ukraine were so planned that they could at a moment's notice be turned over to military production. The Red Army was rapidly enlarged, every soldier receiving the best of education and technical training. Every citizen—the U.S.S.R. does not distinguish between man and woman—was trained up to be a potential soldier. The competition of women on equal terms with men in tough jobs that in other countries are the exclusive privilege of men only made both men and women physically so fit and technically so proficient that the question of manpower became a mere technicality. Phenomenal advance was made in aviation under weather conditions

ranging from Arctic frost to desert sandstorms. Finally, to provide for an uninterrupted flow of war materials in case the Ukraine, the German's ancient dreamland of a *lebensraum* ("living-room"!), were threatened or overrun, plans were perfected in detail and factory buildings kept ready for a wholesale transference of industries bodily from the Ukraine to east of the Urals, into Soviet Asia.

Soviet Asia! Strangely enough, very few had thought anything about that vast, mysterious conglomeration of national areas except that it was peopled by nomads and barbarians and criminals and their descendants. For about a thousand years history has bypassed it except for casual mention as the victim of this marauder or that or the minor sport of a conqueror's ruthless lust. Byron's characterisation of the ocean could, for all that the majority of outsiders knew till the other day, be almost appropriately applied to Soviet Asia—"As creation's dawn beheld, thou rollest now!" We had our eyes fixed mainly upon the European part of the Soviet Union and rarely stopped to ask ourselves what was happening to that vast tract of land that covers more than three-fourths of the Soviet Union and two-thirds of the whole Asiatic continent, is about four times the size of India and sixty times that of her Imperial overlord, Great Britain.

"Prior to the German attack upon Soviet Russia," writes Eileen Bigland, "there were few outsiders who paid much heed to the greater part of the Soviet Union, the part which lies between the Ural mountains and the Far Eastern borders . . . . The Soviets themselves fostered the notion that Asiatic Russia was unimportant for the very good reason that they had a great deal to do in this forgotten land and they felt they could accomplish their objects much more easily without any interference from the outer world. They issued a law forbidding foreign tourists travelling Trans-Siberian to break their journey between Moscow and Vladivostock, they dissuaded casual travellers from crossing the Caspian Sea, and they organised so many tours of European Russia that presently foreign visitors lost all sense of geography and really began to believe that the Russia which mattered ended at the Urals, that

great chain of mountains which is such an effective barrier to European curiosity."[1]

No, Soviet Asia had not been standing still at all. Screened by the indifference of the world in general, it was marching with the Revolution and was making up the leeway of centuries in as many years. Siberia and Central Asia have been in the throes of a mighty regeneration. The Communist regime has in this subcontinent embarked upon the boldest and most ambitious social planning ever attempted by man and, as the convincing test of this terrible War has shown, ever achieved. It is claimed by none that the regeneration of Soviet Asia has been complete and flawless. Much, indeed, remains to be done in the light of modern standards of living reached by the comparatively well-to-do in the capitalist countries. But much has been achieved, and from where the work started to where it has now reached the distance is already very long. It would have been incredible if it had not been actually achieved.

Critics of the Soviet Government's policy and administration of its Asian components have generally been ignorant and in a good number of cases malicious. Sometimes one reads of the disparity between the standard of living of American farmers and skilled workers or of British workers and that of the peasants and workers in the Soviet Union. That the latter have not been able to reach the standard of affluence of the former is held out as a a disparagement of the Soviet regime. The underlying object of this propaganda is, of course, to discourage the spread of Communist ideology in Capitalist countries. The fact, however, is concealed that the present standard of the British and American worker and agriculturist is the result of over a century and a half's struggle in countries with highly developed industries and a prosperous foreign trade while that of the Soviet worker is the result of twenty years' efforts in republics with a shattered economy and little industrial development and practically under a blockade by

[1]Eileen Bigland, *The Key to The Russian Door*, p. 152.

the imperialist Powers. Moreover, the British and American worker has no voice in the management of the State, which flourishes as the organ of their repression while the Soviet worker *is* the State and it is his aim to convert the State machinery into a mere body for controlling production, i.e., adjusting production to human necessities. Furthermore, one must not forget the unemployment in Britain and in U.S.A., the dole and the relief, the Negro and the Welsh miner and lastly, the British colonial policy in Africa and the West Indies. Whatever barbarities may exist in the U.S.S.R., these are not of them. In peacetime as well as in war, there has been no unemployment in the Union. On the other hand, the worker in every department of activity has chosen to overwork himself in order to catch up with and surpass the technical development in the Capitalist countries. He had also noticed the lengthening shadow of the war long before it was on the horizon and had decided to produce for peace as well as for the coming war.

The story of the awakening of Soviet Asia has a lesson for us in India. We have grown accustomed to our poverty, ignorance and slavery. At every step we hear the British ruling class pointing out how difficult and long a business it would be to industrialise India and raise the standard of living of her masses. We hear them stressing with all the solemnity of an archdeacon that Birminghams and Pittsburgs cannot be built in a day. If British and American capitalist privateers bungled in erecting two big centres of industry, it is only a proof of capitalist incompetence and no proof of the fictitious difficulties of industrialisation. The Soviet Government built Magnitogorsk, Dnepropetrovsk and Stalingrad within fifteen years and made perhaps a much better job of them than Birmingham and Pittsburg. We must not be misled into thinking that India's way upwards to mass prosperity, freedom and security must needs be full of long years and difficulties. If the backward peoples of Soviet Asia could do it in so short a period, we can do it in an even shorter period. Everything depends on how we take up our job.

That is why the story of Soviet Asia is important for us. It is the greatest adventure not only in the uplift of very backward peoples but also in the expedition of science and human will against the enormous hostile forces of Nature that for an eternity have forbidden the march of life. It is the wonder story of Man's conquest of Nature by the logical application of sociological and physical sciences. What has been achieved, and how achieved, have a revolutionary significance for the future of mankind. Already its strategic significance for the immediate future is enormous and, maybe, compulsive.

CHAPTER II

AS NATURE MADE IT

SOVIET ASIA consists of Siberia and the Soviet Socialist republics of Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kirghizia, Turkmenistan and Tadjikistan. It covers approximately 65 lakh square miles and constitutes more than one-third of the Asiatic continent. It is bounded on the north by the Arctic Ocean, on the east by the Pacific Ocean with its north-eastern tip only 24 miles from Alaska and the south-eastern extremity a few hundred miles from Japan, on the south by China, Afghanistan, Persia and the majestic ranges of the Pamirs and the Tian-shan and on the west by the Ural ranges and the Caspian Sea. The southernmost republic, Tadjikistan, is very near the northern frontier of India, being at places separated by nine miles of Afghan territory inhabited by people of Tadjik nationality. The human value of the intervening barrier is, therefore, practically nil. But the physical barrier is almost insuperable, consisting as it does of the four-mile high mountain ranges of the Pamirs.

Soviet Asia is very ancient land, perhaps the most ancient of the world. A portion of Siberia, known as Angara Land, is

believed to have been the oldest piece of land. According to some geologists it is "the first part that cooled on the crust of the blazing ball and became hard land. When seas swept over the great continental masses, Angara Land remained dry. When the seas retreated and left behind chalk and other marine formations, Angara Land was still the same. No part of the earth is older than this. No other part of the earth has remained clearer of the aggregations of the aeons."[1] Central Asia, rolling down from south to north and beginning from the heights of the Pamirs and terminating in the level lowlands of the Siberian plains, is probably a later creation of the seismic upheavals that convulsed Mother Earth in her early youth. All the same, so far as human history is concerned, it is the earliest home of mankind. Whether the race called Aryan or Caucasian inhabited the Arctic Circle in the earliest pre-historic days when it was not snowed up by changes in the axis of the earth and enjoyed an equable climate has not yet been proved. But that the earliest known home of this race was Central Asia, from where they migrated north, west, south and east, is generally accepted. Between ancient India and what is now known as Turkmenistan there was constant intercourse, sometimes friendly, sometimes sanguinary, that Nature's formidable wall of mountain and snow could not effectively forbid. The ancient trade routes between the East and the West run through Central Asia. True to the adage that the tradesman's footsteps are invariably followed by those of the military invader, it has been the scene of many major invasions from the days of Alexander the Great (329 B.C.) to the nineteenth century. The invaders of the past, like those of to-day, were not merciful. The prosperity built up by the labours of man in face of the hard obstacles put up by Nature was destroyed time and again by the invading hordes with a thoroughness unequalled even by the Nazis. Men were killed, women, cattle and removable wealth were taken away, children were made slaves and towns and cities were systematically razed.

[1]George Borodin, *Soviet and Tsarist Siberia*, p. 11.

Only the miserable few who fled escaped destruction. The work of centuries was laid to waste and man had to begin anew his difficult task of forcing inhospitable Nature to yield them a living.

But to return to the physical features of Soviet Asia. Between the frosty shore of the Arctic and the frosted peaks of the Kara Korum there is infinite variety, which has been variously classified by different geographers. Most of them, however, lack reliable information, for many portions of Asia, especially the north, were unexplored till the nineteen-twenties. The pioneering zeal of Soviet scientists has in the recent past led to feats of exploration that stand out as the greatest human adventures in history of discoveries. But of that anon. We shall be on safe ground if we adopt the classification adopted by Russian economic geographers generally, on the basis of difference of the soil, as follows:

1. Tundra.
2. Marshes—Taiga (Northern forests).
3. Mixed Forests (Polessye).
4. Forest-Steppe.
5. Black Earth Region.
6. South Steppe (desert).
7. Plateau and mountain land.

The *tundra* roughly extends from the coast of the Arctic Ocean to the 66°5 north latitude. It is one-fifth of Soviet Asia, and covers its entire length from west to east. According to well-informed estimates, the Euro-Asiatic tundra occupies from 5 to 6 million square kilometres. "If we add to this figure sands, marshes, mountains and other lands which cannot be cultivated, we receive a total of 8 or 9 million square kilometres or 35-40 per cent of the total area of the U.S.S.R. which is entirely useless for cultivation."[1] This general observation, however, is not quite correct to-day, for science has aided man, partially though, in breaking Nature's icy barrier against crop production.

[1]S. P. Turin, *The U.S.S.R., an Economic and Social Survey*, p. 5.

The depth of the tundra is from 200 miles here to 400 miles there. It is the land of almost perpetual snow, the temperature remaining for over nine months in the year around 40° (F) below zero, when it is all one desert of stone-hard ice. Only in the brief summer does the ice melt ; but so hard-frozen has the underlying soil become by thousands of years of refrigeration that the water cannot soak into it beyond an average depth of two to three feet. Throughout this short period there is practically no night and under the influence of an ever-present sun a few mosses, lichens and dwarf berry-bushes make their appearance. With them there appear from the forest lands in the south the Samoyeds—men who, with reindeer, eke out a scanty livelihood by making for the sea-shore in summer and catching fish, bear and sable rat for food and fur. The season ends quickly. The thaw again hardens into ice, the vegetation dies of cold and asphyxiation, the aquatic visitors depart for warmer waters and man and deer seek shelter among the southern forests from which they had emerged. The winds howl in gales in the gloomy ice-desert of unrelieved night. In the primordial struggle for supremacy between Nature and Life in the tundra, Nature wins—for a time. But life also seizes its chance. And we shall see how Man, in the shape of the Soviet scientist, has been turning that brief chance to the benefit of mankind.

South of the tundra lies a deep, continuous belt of forests, extending from the Urals to the tip of Kamschatka and broadly covering the wide space between 53° and 66°5 north latitude. The Siberian poplar, cedar, pine, birch and spruce grow in thick abundance in the marshy land screened from the sun by an impenetrable unbrella of leaves. The subsoil has proved to be very rich in minerals. "Every mineral finds its place there, and without exaggeration it could be called the treasure-chest of the world. Only the genius of the Soviet scientists has forged through this frozen belt of the earth and has begun to bring forth the endless treasures of the taiga."[1]

[1]George Borodin, *Soviet and Tsarist Siberia*, p. 64.

The *taiga* comprises the three forests of the geographical divisions set out above. Below 60° and upto 53° north latitude the soil is drier and the forest deciduous. Game is abundant and fur-trapping was the staple industry till the Revolution. The forest area is estimated at about 4·5 million square miles, of which the southern fringe which emerges as lightly wooded grassland, offers fairly good soil for cultivation of rye, flax and hemp. The northern forest, where it has yielded to the activities of man, grows barley and oats.

The *Black Earth region,* which ranks among the world's most fertile regions, is a continuation of the rich agricultural soil of the Ukraine across the Urals into Western Siberia. This region largely grows cereals, sugar-beet, tobacco, hemp, sunflower seeds and fruit. On account of its fertility this belt of soil has been the home of settlers other than the exiles, who made it their home during the past centuries. Here also there is a great wealth of mineral resources, little tapped before the Revolution, which the Soviet Government is fast turning to use.

Siberia, politically a component of the Russian Socialist Federated Republic, comprises the above-mentioned physical divisions. The next two belts comprise Soviet Central Asia. Nature is neither variegated nor merciful in these areas. The Black Earth belt is succeeded by the *Southern Steppes,* turned by long lack of water into a desert. The Kirghiz Steppes, covering the major portion of Kazakhstan, is alternately pastoral land and salt desert. But downwards, where the desert approaches the borders of the Turkestan republics, the salinity of the soil disappears. The level of the land rises until it merges into the tableland of the Pamirs, "the roof of the world." The southern portion of the Steppes is semi-desert from want of water. Wherever water is available, the soil has yielded excellent returns in cotton and beet. Here also the underground wealth is great and all that it now needs is a full working out. There are copper, zinc and lead and veins of oil.

Now we come to the last of the belts, the *great mountains* of the ranges radiating from the Pamirs. There is sub-tropical vege-

tation here, cotton predominating. The craggy hillsides are stuffed with rare metals and minerals. The lower reaches of the mountains are brown deserts, the higher slopes are thickly wooded while their tops are bound with a crown of perpetual snow. Thus this one belt reproduces in brief the Steppe, the taiga and the tundra in reverse order.

The climate of Soviet Asia ranges from Polar cold (-100°F) in the tundra to 150°F in the desert. Practically the whole of Siberia gets snowed up in winter, while the plateaux on the southern extremity also present a similar phenomenon. There is, however, a great disparity between the winter and the summer temperatures practically all over Soviet Asia. While winter is bitterly cold and inhibitive of life, summer is distinctly warm (and very hot in the Kirghiz desert) and is generally the signal for a great outburst of vegetable life. Soviet planning aims, already with remarkable success, to get the biggest yield out of this congenial annual break.

One main reason for the extremity of temperature is the great scarcity of water from which all these lands suffer. Fertility of soil and underground mineral wealth cannot by themselves support life. The principal rivers of Siberia, the Ob (3,200 miles), the Yenisei (2,950 miles) and the Lena (3,100 miles) flow from south to north. They are navigable in summer for much of their downward courses but as they approach their estuary on the Arctic Ocean they remain frozen for practically the whole of the year. The other great river of Siberia, the Amur, after zigzagging for hundreds of miles along the Soviet-Manchurian border, flows north into the Pacific. The one big river of Kazakhstan, the Ural (1,400 miles) takes a southerly course to fall into the greatest inland sea of the world, the Caspian Sea. The two considerable rivers of Central Asia, Amu-Dariya and Syr-Dariya (both 1,500 miles) flow into the Aral Sea, one of the three great salt lakes in Soviet Asia. The other two salt lakes are the Baikal and the Balkhash. These rivers with their tributaries and the lesser rivers and the lakes have been poorly able to supply the needs of irrigation.

Rainfall is very low in Soviet Asia. The high barrier of mountains to the south prevents the access of the tropical monsoons into Central Asia, while the freezing cold of the north turns all vapour into ice so that the polar winds are dry and chilly. The average winter rainfall is 5 inches, while the summer rainfall ranges from 10 inches in the tundra to 20 inches in the Central Siberian belt, 10 inches in the Southern Steppes and 5 inches in the desert area. The spring thaw on the Siberian rivers causes extensive floods in the tundra area but as it cannot soak into the frozen subsoil it causes waterlogged marshes that winter again freezes into hard ice.

The essential of economic development is man, and the first condition of life is water. Lack of water discouraged the settlement of peasants on rich Siberian soil until twentyfive years ago. The first concern of the Soviet scientists was to look for underground sources of water and canalisation of river waters so that this requisite could be better available to man, beast and plant. The hard conditions of life made hardy, tough men of the inhabitants of Soviet Asia, an advantage derived from geography that was offset by ignorance, superstition and a long tradition of barbarism and ruthlessness.

For all its size, therefore, Soviet Asia has been sparsely populated, the round total being 35 million before the present war and the consequent removal of large numbers of people of European Russia into Asia. Of this total, Siberia alone claims 18 million and the Central Asian Republics 17 million. This, however, represents a large increase of population as compared with the Czarist days. But it can well hold and maintain a tenfold population yet. With a quarter of the size of Soviet Asia, India has to support the burden of a population eleven times bigger. Thus her task would appear to be more uphill. There will be over 40 times more manpower available here for working out a scientific plan. The problem will be to find productive employment for all. Naturally, much more speeding up than has been possible in Soviet Asia will be required. But the method, if not the tempo, of mass uplift must be borrowed from the Soviet plan in Asia.

CHAPTER III

IN THE FEN OF CENTURIES

NEITHER historically nor ethnically is Soviet Asia homogeneous. Siberia has a history of its own, while the Central Asian Republics have theirs. But the common thread running between them is one of stagnation and continued degradation of Man from the beginning of history to the Bolshevik Revolution. In the last chapter we saw how Nature had fashioned the life of man in those stern lands. This chapter we devote to a bird's eye view of what man had made of man.

To begin with Siberia, its earliest history is little known. It was sparsely inhabited by aboriginal tribes, the most considerable of whom were the Samoyeds and the Yenissians. In the 11th century the Turks and in the 13th century the Mongols invaded the habitable portions in the south which the primitive industry of the aborigines had reclaimed from the wilderness, destroyed all they had built and drove them north into the tundra and the taiga and into the Far Eastern mountains of Kamschatka. And there they remained, only vaguely known to, and knowing, the world beyond, hunting and fishing their way till the advent of the Socialist State with its revolutionary mission. The Russians, who were a growing European Power, were till the end of the 16th century confined to the west of the Urals, which for them marked the eastern limits of the civilised world. Of a mysterious land east of the mountains they were, however, vaguely aware through the tales carried by the merchants of Novgorod, particularly the Stroganov family, who used to bring salt and sable fur from the uncharted land. As it was in the interest of the merchants that others should not interfere with their profits, they magnified the difficulties and dangers of the land.

Of all the merchants the Stroganovs were the most prosperous and most intrepid. In search of sable fur and other rare luxuries,

their agents pushed east and farther east. The original Stroganov had obtained a concession from the Czar of a large tract of land from the Urals to the Yenisei and had named it Mangaseia. The Lena was later discovered and Lake Baikal, and the Amur was reached in 1643. New towns sprang up on the banks of the rivers and Yeniseisk, Yakutsk and Khabarovsk flourished before 1650.

In the meantime, a Cossack chief named Ataman Yermak Timofeeff, in disgrace with the court of Czar Ivan the Terrible, was driven out with his followers from his Caucasian territory. With his party he rode into the country east of the Urals, beat the Tartar forces, encamped himself in the capital, Sibir, and proclaimed himself the Prince of Sibiria or *Siberia*. To make peace with the Czar he placed his new domains under the imperial suzerainty of Ivan (1590).

Now trade had joined with empire and exploitation had become associated with subjugation. The forces of the Czar quickly reached the limits of the Stroganovs' discoveries and pushed farther on. By the middle of the 17th century they reached the Sea of Okhotsk in the Pacific, following the course of the Amur river. The Arctic was reached about the same time. But while the Stroganovs merely cheated (in more pleasant language, did prosperous business), the armies of Russia killed, raped and looted. The Tartars and Mongols led a revolt against this barbarity of civilisation. The Czars sent more soldiers and—for the first time—convicts to wait upon these soldiers and to slave for the settlers, traders and officials. These were later augmented by the exiles, men in every way better qualified to be citizens except for the disqualification of refusing to subserve the autocracy of the Czars. By 1710 the Slav population of Siberia had risen to 250,000 and by 1897, to nearly 6,000,000, representing 80% of the population of the whole area.

So far the Russian conquests had mainly run along the central Black Earth belt grazing by the borders of the Chinese Empire. The relations between the two empires were at first commercial

and then, inevitably, political, for the rulers of Moscow and Peking both wanted to exercise overlordship over the buffer states of Junguria (Northern portion of Chinese Turkestan), Mongolia and Manchuria. The differences were protracted and bloody—more of the blood spilt being Chinese—and in 1689 a treaty was signed by which the Chinese were allowed a free hand in the border states in exchange for the right of unrestricted trade by Russians in China. From this time onwards the great neighbours have lived in peace for two and a half centuries.

All this time attempts were being made by Russian as well as British and other sailors to round the North Pole and reach the mysterious land of America of which Amerigo Vespucchi and Columbus had caught a glimpse. From 1553 to 1728 the barrier of ice seemed to break the endeavours of men sailing in little wooden boats and depending on the wind to carry them to unknown success. In 1728 Behring crossed and mapped the narrow strip of water separating Asia and America, now known as the Behring Straits. From then began the "Pacific-coast era" of Russian imperialism. Russian fur-trappers crossed the Straits into Arctic America or Alaska and found it full of otter and sable rats and almost devoid of men. The Russian-American Company, a big Russian business concern, annexed Alaska in the name of the Czar, who accepted the gift. When, however, this company proposed to annex California in the same holy name, the Czar demurred. He had no Navy and few men to control the Pacific. There was another good reason, too, for his lack of interest in lands beyond the seas, to which we shall presently come. In the end, Alaska was sold to the United States of America in 1867 for 7,200,000 dollars in gold. Henceforward, Russia remained a Euro-Asiatic Power.

Notwithstanding the inhospitality of Siberia, its abundant natural resources were recognised since the days of the Stroganovs and the incentive to its occupation was the enrichment of the Czar and the Russian nobles, who were also the biggest capitalists. They wanted to exploit this vast natural wealth without molesta-

tion. But the difficulties of life were so many that few wanted to settle voluntarily and Russian big business needed all the men they wanted. Foreigners they could not trust, as the tales carried by them might incite other empire-hungry European Powers to pounce upon their god-given preserves. So Russians had to be imported from the west. First came the criminals and then the political exiles, the latter being anyone from a rebel against the Czar to any eyesore of the village squire. Still manpower was lamentably short. Moreover, the wealth unearthed from the distant regions could not be economically brought to Europe, the sea-route being impossible, nor could practical economic and strategic use be made of the only port Russia had at length been able to build herself on a free ocean—Vladivostok on the Pacific. A grand railroad, linking St. Petersburg with Vladivostok, was projected. This railway, built between 1891 and 1903, ranks in importance as an engineering feat as in no way inferior to the Suez or the Panama Canal. Certainly it helped the rapid colonisation of Siberia and the greater exploitation of its minerals. But not without a heavy share of human tragedy. Millions of Russians and Ukrainians were lured by misleading accounts of Siberia's natural wealth and easy conditions of life to journey into Siberia with the object of settling there. Once there, they found the conditions very different and very difficult. Some came back, some died and the rest kept on eking out a miserable existence as agriculturists. The remainder of the working population were the convicts, whose lives were a hell on earth, the political exiles, mostly angels in hell's dungeons, and the indigenous population, tending the reindeer and trapping fur.[1] Mongol, Turk, Samoyed and Russian—all suffered under a system that benefited only the "upper" classes. And thus the Revolution found them, neck deep in poverty and ignorance.

[1] The pitiable lot of the convict and the exile in pre-Revolution days has been graphically described in George Borodin's *Soviet and Tsarist Siberia*. Ch. II.

Turkestan (by which name are designated the five constituent Republics of the Soviet Union, viz., Kirghizia, Turkemenistan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Tadjikistan) is a very ancient region. The traditions of the culture and valour of Bactria (Balkh) and Trans-Oxania (Bokhara) go back to an age long before the Greek civilisation. The ethnic relationship and social and economic intercourse between the so-called "Aryan" settlers in Northern India and their Central Asian brethren of the same race seems to have held strongly till the rise of Persia (Iran) as an imperialist Power a century or two before Alexander the Great. Iran and Turan ("the country beyond Iran," *i.e.*, western Turkestan) were constantly at war. Eventually Iran prevailed. Whether because the climate and surface of the earth were then a little different from what they are now or because the people were more industrious and enterprising, Turan was not the desert country it became later on. Flourishing cities and populous villages rose under Persian suzerainty. Being on the land route between India and China, between whom there was frequent commercial and cultural intercourse, particularly since the days of the Buddha, Turan's culture was rich and variegated. To this was added another strain from Greece as Alexander the Great in course of his conquests subdued Iran and Turan and settled a number of Greeks in Bactriana, which he annexed. The other parts of the region went to the Parthians' empire. The Greeks, with their *flair* for urban culture, built a number of cities and in course of time were absorbed into the indigenous Bactrians. Early Christianity travelled to Central Asia by the western route. Thus before Mahomet there flourished a number of multi-racial multi-religious States, tribal in composition and feudal in character, in which peoples like Medes, Persians, Indo-Aryans, Parthians, Huns and Greeks and religions like Parsism, Buddhism, Mazdaism, Christianity and Early Hinduism were represented.

In the 8th century came down the avalanche of Muslim conquest, a predominantly Arab flood of zealous and well-organised men who sought to establish the word of God by the force of naked

steel. They destroyed the old cultural institutions and monuments and imposed their own culture on Central Asia. As the flood receded, Islam remained but both the invaders and their culture had been absorbed into the native population and culture. As Arab power weakened, the Karliuks came, again to be assimilated into the native population. Between constant war and peace, in course of which Turkestan for a time united with the Seljuk empire of Persia, the original Arab State, *Mavera-ul-neher,* situate between the Amu-Daria and the Syr-Daria, lost precedence and came under the overlordship of Khorezm (Khiva).

The de-Arabising of the Arab conquerors and the consolidation of the Islamic faith—the latter a remarkable fact because the first preaching of its tenets was by oppression and terrorism—took upwards of four centuries.[1] Early in the thirteenth century came the first flood of invasion from the east. The Mongol hordes of Jenghis Khan swarmed over Central Asia and Europe like an army of locusts and despoiled the wealth of all the States from China to France. His empire was ephemeral but not so the destruction caused by him. Khiva, over which he appointed his second son Jugtai to rule, had to build up its prosperity anew.

A century and a half elapse before the second flood of invasion overtakes the land. The hero of destruction this time is Timur-lang, or Tamerlane of Marlowe's romantic drama. He was the most wonderful conqueror of his time, having sacked Moscow one summer and being at the gates of Delhi the next, and having sacked them both so well that barely a man was left alive in either city after he had finished. Even the pages of history bleed and weep while recounting his exploits. "He dethroned no less than twenty-seven kings and even harnessed kings to his chariot." Central Asia caught his fancy for several reasons. It lay in about the centre of his extensive empire and was high enough to be the

[1] Why Islam succeeded in converting almost the whole of Persia and Turkestan and failed to convert even a bare majority of the Hindus seems to need expert investigation.

"roof of the world" and therefore a fit place for the King of Kings to live in. Of Samarkhand he made a golden city which he adorned with the spoils of victory ; of the people he made abject slaves. What he built advertised his greatness ; what he destroyed was the result of centuries of toil of the people.

Timur's empire melted away with his death, but his dynasty continued to rule over Turkestan. Within a century, however, the Uzbeks under Sheibani Khan had driven them back from the country north of the Amur and taken Bokhara. The Uzbek empire, again, broke up into *Khanates* or tributary States, and northern Turkestan formed the Khanate of Bokhara. In 1740 Khiva was conquered by Nadir Shah. Another spoliation ensued for over half a century, after which the Khanate of Bokhara regained and extended its domains. From now on till the Russian conquest it was a story of recurrent warfare between Bokhara on one side and either Khiva or Khokand on the other. As a result, the subjects lived in a continued state of poverty and misery, good cattle, pretty women and good crops all being liable to confiscation by the warlords of the Khans and their armed underlings. The Uzbeks were themselves a mixed race of Turks and Mongols. Unlike the earlier conquerors they wanted to settle in their own colonies. So they drove the local population, the Tadjiks, out of the plains though they could not dismiss the Tadjik culture so easily.

While the three Khanates of Bokhara, Khiva and Khokand continued to scramble for ascendancy, the Afghans and the Persians made a bid for easy empire-grabbing, to be followed closely by the Czar of Russia who, having decided against expansion across the Pacific, elected to expand his empire in southern Asia which would not only make the Siberian empire safe against attacks but would provide the Russian governing class with a rich field for exploitation. The Russian invasion, unlike their earlier annexation of Siberia, took the form of a ruthless campaign ; and, in the manner of British annexation of India, a piecemeal campaign. The first efforts, which emulated the

British example of siding in the quarrels between one prince and another, did not succeed, so civilisation was carried at the point of the sword. The Kirghiz, who were a serious nuisance to the Russians in Orenburg, were at first subdued by a general process of "liquidation". In 1864, the Khanate of Khokand fell before Russian arms. In 1868, the Emir of Bokhara ceded Samarkand to Russia and five years later became a vassal of the Czar. The same fate befell Khiva. The outlying territory of Merv was occupied in 1881. Henceforth the British in India and the Russians in the Pamirs looked daggers at each other across the buffer State of Afghanistan. But neither the British, who attempted, nor the Russians, who did not, could take Afghanistan, which was finally induced to favour the British.

In Turkestan the Russians, like the British in India, did not colonise. They ruled in order to exploit the raw materials, particularly cotton which naturally grew in the valleys and plains, for their capitalists. Business was done through native agents and usurers. The peasant, who formed the bulk of the population, was poor and heavily indebted. There was little chance for him to be other than poor. Education was almost completely denied to him, his intellectual, moral and spiritual encyclopædia being the revered village *mullah* who himself was usually an ignoramus. If he had good cattle, a good horse or a pretty wife or daughter, it would inevitably be appropriated by the local landlord, the representative of the Khan or Emir. The land did not belong to him but to the landlord. His labour belonged to him but not so its fruit. The few industries that were opened were owned and largely worked by Russian emigrants. The Uzbek invasion of the 17th century had destroyed the elaborate system of irrigation that the Tadjiks had built up to convert a dusty semi-desert into a prosperous garden country. This system was not rebuilt, and the heavy distrust weighing on the heart of the peasant must have been the most active cause of his neglect of his own welfare. In effect, "the poor was becoming poorer, the rich richer, while wealth was being concentrated in the hands of the Russian bankers, the native moneylenders and the beys. . . The nomad Kazakh, Kirghiz and

Turkoman tribes in the rest of Central Asia were even worse off than the agricultural people. Their pastures were being taken away from them and settled by Russians from the over-populated central and southern districts of Russia. The Government's purpose was to reduce the agrarian unrest in Russia proper by colonising new lands. Deprived of their pastures, their sole source of livelihod, the nomads retired farther and farther into the barren Steppes where they were rapidly dying out."[1]

The social customs, too, reflected the poverty and degradation of the economic condition of the people. Water, a dear commodity, was parcelled out in private ownership. The country was Muslim in religion and culture. "The various exponents and adepts of the faith—*mullahs, imams, sufis* and the rest—were an important group, functionless economically, but socially powerful by reason of the ignorance and incredulity of the people."[2] The position of women was particularly low: "their status was much that of domestic animals. The 'talking animal', the Kazakh term for a woman, expressed a usual point of view. . . In proportion as the influence of the *mullahs* grew strong in this or that district Central Asian women suffered more and more, coming to its climax in Bokhara. There the veils were thickest and the penalties severest. . . Women were bought and sold and could be procured in no other way."[3] Kunitz records the reminiscences of Khoziat Markulanova, a Communist Tadjik woman leader, as follows:

"When Khoziat was eight years old, her mother made her a little *paranja*. Khoziat cried and refused to put it on. But her mother said that she was too pretty and that if she didn't go covered, the Bek's procurers would grab her. Khoziat did not know what that meant, but she had heard so many stories of how little girls died in the Bek's palace that she was glad to put on the *paranja*."[4]

[1] Joshua Kunitz, *Dawn Over Samarkand*, p. 26
[2] Leonard Barnes, *Soviet Light on the Colonies*, p. 259
[3] E. S. Bates, *Soviet Asia*, p. 145-6.
[4] Kunitz, *Dawn over Samarkand*, p. 266.

This *paranja,* by the way, is a loose cloak enclosing the upper part of the body from the crown of the head to the hips with a closely woven horsehair net suspended in front of the face.

As for education, the following account from an authoritative source[1] will indicate the deplorable state of affairs:

"In Kirghizia, in tsarist times, only one out of every two hundred persons could read and write. Many of its villages did not have a single literate person among their inhabitants . . . In Kazakhstan only one out of every hundred persons could read and write. Only *mullahs* and *beys* were literate in Uzbekistan. In 1914 only 93 Uzbek boys attended the secondary schools of Turkestan. Matters were still worse as regards the education of women in tsarist Russia. Out of a female population of 82,000 in the Garm area in the Pamirs, only 7 women could read or write."

What a family resemblance to real conditions in India about the time of the Bolshevik Revolution!

Into this fen of centuries, where empires and emperors rose and vanished like bubbles of noxious gas on a scummy surface, came the flood of the Bolshevik Revolution. Uzbek, Tadjik, Kazakh, Kirghiz, Turcoman—all professing the Muslim faith, all forcibly confined within the prison-walls of ignorance and poverty and all equally held in the thrall of economic exploitation by a handful of their own countrymen and Russians—were caught and borne irresistibly along in that mighty current. We shall presently see how the Revolution cleansed them of the ancient slime and carried them to the freshwaters of civilisation and the free sunlight of knowledge.

[1] Yanka Kupala in *U S S R Speaks For Itself,* Pp. 327-28.

CHAPTER IV

THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

THE Revolution that took place in Russia in 1917 was of a world-shaking character. It was, strictly speaking, composed of two Revolutions. The earlier, or the February Revolution, effected the deposition of the Czar and the brief installation into power of the Russian capitalist and landowning classes. This, however, was only superficial, for the Bolsheviks (Russian Communists) and other parties that had revolutionary sympathies—like the Mensheviks and the Social-Revolutionaries—held the real power, the sanction of the workers and soldiers, in their hands. In the key cities of European Russia there existed a parallel power—the Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies. The soldier deputies were mostly peasants who had been mobilised for the war. The Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies was an organ of the alliance of workers and peasants against the Czarist regime. At the same time it was an organ of their power, an organ of the dictatorship of the working class and the peasantry.

Thus there was "a peculiar interlocking of two powers" and two antagonistic dictatorships, one being the capitalist-landlord Government and the other the organised masses. The result was *dual power* at constant and increasing friction with each other. The Bolsheviks held no power in the Government nor at first were they in a majority in the Soviets. But they represented the most progressive political ideals and, granting that Marxism fundamentally is scientific, applied the correct, scientific technique of Revolution. For effective strength they went out to the masses and educated them into realising their own rights and freedom and the necessity of the Soviet form of government for the country. How swift the process of education was will be apparent from the fact that eight months afterwards, the Bolsheviks and the masses together were able to overthrow the capitalist-landlord government and establish a government of the working class.

The aim of the Bolsheviks was to put into practical application the maxim first enunciated by Marx: "From each according to his abilities to each according to his needs." The governments all the world over were a complete contradiction of this thesis. What they practised and eulogised as *laissez faire* and freedom of private enterprise was really this: "From the toiler more than his abilities, to the capitalist all the fruits of the toiler's labour." The State existed—and outside the U.S.S.R. still exists—to ensure the exploitation of the worker by the capitalist. The Russian Revolution was, therefore, looked upon with great hostility both by the Allied Anglo-French-American Powers as well as the Central Austro-German Powers. When the Revolutionary Government went off the War and adopted a policy of complete neutrality both the belligerents attacked Russia.

The first item in the Bolshevik programme was the nationalisation of all lands, i.e., the passing of all land ownership to the central State power and the disposition of all the land being vested in the local and regional Soviets of Peasants' Deputies. This meant the confiscation of the estates of the nobility and the erection thereon of collective farms. But besides the big landlords who owned vast tracts, there was another class of small landowners—the *kulak*, roughly corresponding to the *jotedar* of Bengal. He was later defined as "a peasant who systematically employs hired labour, who possesses power-driven machinery such as a flour-mill or a wool-combing machine, who hires out such machinery or contracts to work on other farms, who rents out living quarters, who leases land for commercial purposes, or who receives unearned income of any kind." The *kulak* was generally a combination of the village moneylender and lessee of agricultural land and he managed to do quite well for himself. This "upper peasant" was not eliminated at this stage, and in fact it took the Bolshevik Government nearly 18 years to completely nationalise the land. The first step was to make the peasant feel the reality of his common ownership of the land as well as to make the industrial worker feel the reality of his common ownership of the factories. In field, factory and workshop the sovereign right of the toiler was estab-

lished. A consequence of it was that every member of the State enjoyed a right to employment and a minimum standard of decent living.

It is necessary to note that the Bolshevik Revolution at this stage centred round European Russia and particularly Great Russia with its natural centre in Moscow and political centre in Petrograd (now Leningrad). Here were gathered those organised armies of industrial workers who first took up from the hands of Lenin the lighted torch of Revolution. This had been handed over to a half-awakened peasantry to whom the expropriation of the landowners came as the promise of unsurpassable freedom. But the extent of the conflagration was small and in any case the Revolution seemed for a time to hang by a precarious thread. With the Revolution Russia had cried off the War in which the Czarist army had been suffering defeats. Already the Baltic provinces of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, Poland and the Ukraine were under the occupation of Germany, who imposed a harsh and humiliating treaty upon the Revolutionary Government at Brest-Litovsk and then went on to despoil the Don basin of coal and iron and the Caucasus of its oil.

And now began an era of persecution of the Revolutionary Government which strongly influenced the course of development of the Soviet Union for the next quarter of a century. The reorganisation of the Red Army in February, 1918 was followed in April by the landing of Japanese troops in Vladivostok with the aid of the British, the formation of a counter-revolutionary Russian Government in Peking with Kolchak as War Minister, the occupation by the retreating Czechoslovak forces of strategic points on the Trans-Siberian Railway and finally, an armed landing by British forces on the Murmansk district and their occupation of Archangel in August. These invaders supported with arms and equipment a local White Guard revolt, overthrew the Soviets and set up a White Guard "Government of North Russia."

Though the British and the Germans were at that time locked in mortal combat, an underlying chord of sympathy seemed to exist on the question of wrecking the Soviet Government. The Anglo-French-American-Japanese *bloc*, however, decided to score off their

own bat without coming to an understanding or a peace with Germany directed against the Bolshevik regime. While Eastern Siberia was occupied by Japan, the White Guards set up a bourgeois government in Western Siberia with Omsk as capital. In north Caucasus, Generals Kornilov, Alexyev and Denikin, with the financial and armed support of the British and the French, raised a White Guard army and incited the wealthier class of the Cossacks to move against the Soviets.

Great Russia was thus isolated, and communications with the East were virtually cut off. "Soviet Russia was thus cut off from her principal sources of food, raw material and fuel. Conditions were hard in Soviet Russia at that period. There was a shortage of bread and meat. The workers were starving. In Moscow and Petrograd a bread ration of ⅛th of a pound was issued to them every other day, and there were times when no bread was issued at all. The factories were at a standstill, or almost at a standstill owing to lack of raw materials and fuel." The Soviet Government ordered conscription and introduced, as an economic war measure, "War Communism." The response was magnificent. Krasnov was hurled back from Tsaritsyn (now famous as Stalingrad) after protracted fighting by a brilliant leader named Josef Stalin ; Denikin's progress was held. Kornilov died in action and his army began to disintegrate. The Czechoslovaks were driven from the Volga region. A British-sponsored revolt in Yaroslavl was suppressed. The Whites were hunted out and executed as mercilessly as they had been executing the Reds in every important city in Central Russia.

In November, 1918 German resistance collapsed. There was a Social-Democratic revolution within Germany, and the German Army evacuated the Ukraine and Trans-Caucasia. Their place, however, was taken by the British and French. They sent their fleets into the Black Sea and landed troops in Odessa and Trans-Caucasia. A blockade of Russia was proclaimed and all her routes of communication beyond her borders were cut off. The chief hopes of the interventionists lay in the counter-revolutionary leader Kolchak, who had a "government" in Omsk, was proclaimed

"supreme ruler of Russia" and was given all possible assistance. From there Kolchak advanced across the Urals in the spring of 1919 but in April met with a severe defeat at the hands of the Red Army which pursued the Whites across the Urals and Siberia. His troops revolted and those who stuck to him were fugitives from the revenge of the Red Army and the Siberian peasants who harrassed them from the rear. Kolchak himself surrendered to the French general in charge of the Allied forces in Siberia who, finding his own troops faced with annihilation, gave him up to the Reds. Kolchak was tried and shot in February, 1920. Shortly before this General Yudenich, who, operating from Esthonia, had almost succeeded in reaching the outskirts of Petrograd, was defeated by the Red Army under the leadership of Trotsky.

The Anglo-French interventionists tried Denikin once again. By the middle of October, 1919 Denikin had seized the whole of the Ukraine, taken Orel and almost taken Tula. Moscow was in danger. But before the end of the month Denikin was defeated in the decisive battles of Orel and Voronezh and, pursued by the Red Army, fled to the south. By the beginning of 1920 the Ukraine and North Caucasus were for a second time liberated. The collapse of the Whites and the growing apprehensions of labour risings at home decided the Anglo-French *bloc* that there was not much use in maintaing a blockade of Russia. It was accordingly called off in January, 1920.

But the end of Soviet Russia's birth travails had not yet been reached. Now Pilsudski of Poland decided to show his hand with the backing of France. Like a burglar he attacked Russia in April, 1920. At the same time Baron Wrangel gathered the remnants of Denikin's army in the Crimea and threatened the Donetz basin and the Ukraine. The Poles tried to seize all Russia west of the Dneiper so as to give their state a frontier from Danzig to Odessa. They succeeded in capturing Kiev, but no farther. The Red Army hurled the Poles back to the gates of Warsaw but due to defective leadership at the top—later ascribed to the mistaken policy of Trotsky—had to retire before taking the capital. The Poles advanced again but were halted a second time. Lenin foresaw the

interminable character of the war that would develop and the endless complications it would add to an already complicated situation for the infant Republic. So in October, 1920 he concluded a peace with Poland, ceding Galicia and part of Byelorussia. The Red Army was now free to deal with Wrangel and by the end of November his forces were liquidated.

This was the last major attempt of the interventionists. Though minor attempts continued for some time more, the Soviet Government found the breathing time it so bardly needed and got the opportunity to put its plans on the way to fulfilment. Nearly two years were to elapse before Vladivostok, the last piece of Soviet territory to remain in the hands of the invaders, was restored from the hands of the Japanese.

CHAPTER V

THE PROBLEM OF NATIONALITIES

THE Soviet's achievements in the Asiatic part of the U.S.S.R. are without a doubt based upon the equality of status accorded to the inhabitants of its non-Russian components. Turkesan, in particular, is peopled by races very different in colour, nationality, language, economic development and religion from the Great Russians whose king had established rulership over them, and whose proletariat now wanted to fraternise with them. They had not passed through a capitalist development, nor possessed an industrial proletariat of their own. In the majority of cases they had preserved the patriarchal-tribal form of life—as in Kirghizia—or had not yet progressed beyond a primitive semi-feudal, semi-patriarchal form of life. When the Soviet Government took over the Czar's colonies the small number of urban industrial workers that were in these lands were mostly Great Russians. They formed an

immigrant group of foreign specialists (like the British commercial community in India) different from the native population in every particular of social existence and parading a superior culture and a higher standard of living. In the days of the Czar these were the "superior" people and the natives the "inferior". Outside of the Soviet Union this order is even to-day the gold-laden White Man's Burden.

Anyway, the Soviet Government on assumption of power found itself saddled with about 30 million human beings mainly of Turkic origin. How to deal with these was a serious problem, but not one that the Bolsheviks had not foreseen. Years before the Revolution, Lenin and Stalin had given special attention to the problem of nationalities and national minorities. Stalin, considered to be the greatest expert on the national question, had in 1913 drawn up a report on the National question as viewed from the Marxian angle. His definition of a "nation" has not yet been improved upon. *"A nation,"* he said, *"is a historically evolved, stable community of language, territory, economic life and psychological make-up manifested in a community of culture."*[1] The concept of nationalities is not eternal, but belongs to a definite epoch, the the epoch of capitalism. Their rise synchronised with their conversion into national States. In the east multi-national States like Russia, Austria and Hungary arose. Their existence was made possible by the continuation of feudalism and feeble industrial development, where the nationalities forced into the background by subjugation were not able to consolidate themselves economically into integral nations. Czarist Russia's Eastern empire was colonial in the character of its exploitation. Because there was no native industrial bourgeoisie in Turkestan there was so far no serious revolt against the Russian ruling bureaucracy. But wherever there arises a bourgeois class among subject peoples the idea of nationalism is born and fostered. The common people are brought into the current of the nationalist movement by repression from the alien ruling class, which provokes their discontent. "The national struggle

[1] J. Stalin, *Marxism and the National Question*, p. 7.

under the conditions of rising capitalism is a struggle of the bourgeois classes among themselves. Sometimes the bourgeoisie succeeds in drawing the proletariat into the national movement, and then the national struggle *externally* assumes a 'nation-wide' character. But this is so only externally. *In its essence* it is always a bourgeois struggle, one that is chiefly favourable to and suitable for the bourgeoisie."[1]

The imperialist policy of national oppression, however, affects the workers perhaps more than the bourgeoisie, particularly in those nations where the native bourgeoisie has been able to come to a working arrangement with the ruling bourgeois class. The policy of repression finds other ways of working itself out. "It not infrequently passes from a 'system' of *oppression* to a 'system' of *inciting* nations against each other, to a 'system' of massacres and pogroms . . . 'Divide and rule'—such is the purpose of the policy of inciting nations against each other. And where such a policy succeeds it is a tremendous evil for the proletariat and a serious obstacle to the work of uniting the workers of all the nationalities in the state.[2]

It would, therefore, follow that the idea of nationalities, a product of capitalism and a creation of bourgeois interests, would die out with the collapse of capitalism. "The fate of the national movement," Stalin concluded, "is naturally connected with the fate of the bourgeoisie. The final collapse of the national movement is possible only with the collapse of the bourgeoisie. Only under the reign of socialism can peace be fully established."[3] When the working class comes into power, there is an end of competition and exploitation. As soon as all people become economically equal, the main incentive to separate national existence will vanish. The natural barriers of distance and communications as well as the variations of natural conditions of existence in different climates, of course, remain for a longer period, but they do not

[1] J. Stalin, *Marxism and the National Question*, p. 15.

[2] Ibid., p. 16. These observations are particularly applicable to the Hindu-Muslim problem in India.

[3] Ibid., p. 17.

affect the equality and comradeship between the dwellers of different geographical regions.

This view of the national problem marks a definite departure from the standpoint taken by the Socialists of the Second International. They tended to confine their consideration of the national problem to a narrow circle of questions concerning, primarily, "cultured" nationalities. "The Irish, the Hugarians, the Poles, the Finns, the Serbs, and several other European nationalities—this comprised the circle of disfranchised people in whose destinies the heroes of the Second International were interested. The scores and hundreds of millions of Asiatic and African peoples who are suffering national oppression in its most savage and cruel form usually remained outside of their field of vision. . . . Leninism laid bare this crying incongruity, broke down the walls between whites and blacks, between Europeans and Asiatics, between the 'civilized' and 'uncivilized' slaves of imperialism, and thus linked the national problem with the problem of the colonies. The national problem was thereby transformed from a particular and internal state problem into a general and international problem, into a world problem of emancipating the oppressed peoples in the dependent countries and colonies from the yoke of imperialism."[1]

In the second place, on the question of self-determination of nations, there was a similar extension of scope. This was generally interpreted by Socialists of the imperialist nations (and is still being so interpreted now) as the right of autonomy, which is sometimes even narrowed down to mean cultural autonomy while political power is left in the hands of the ruling nation. (For instances of this the Ramsay Macdonald brand recipe for Dominion Status for India and Burma and the French "freedom" for Algeria and Tunisia may be cited. The British and French Socialists, by agreeing to this kind of colonial "freedom," are parties to imperialist exploitation under a thin camouflage.) "Leninism broadened the conception of self-determination and interpreted it as the right of the oppressed peoples of the dependent countries and colonies to

[1] J. Stalin, *Problems of Leninism*, p. 50.

complete secession, as the right of nations to independent existence as states. This precluded the possibility of justifying annexations by interpreting the right to self-determination to mean the right to autonomy."[1]

In the third place, many earlier Socialists considered the question of oppressed nations as one that could be solved by the conferment of a status of equality with other nations. They ignored the fact that such equality is absolutely impossible under imperialism, where a small group of nations prospers by exploiting another, and far larger, group of nations. "Leninism . . . . declared that pronouncements about the 'equality of nations' which are not backed by the direct support of the proletarian parties for the liberation struggles of the oppressed nations are meaningless and false. In this way the question of the oppressed nations became a question of supporting, of rendering real and continued assistance to, the oppressed nations in their struggle against imperialism for real equality of nations, for their independent existence as states."[2]

Finally, Leninism gave a new background to the problem of nationalities. The earlier socialists were "reformists". They viewed the problem of each subjugated nation as isolated from the all-pervading problem of capitalist rule and imperialism, its overthrow and the establishment of the rule of the proletariat. This notion held, without logical justification, that the proletarian movement in Europe could be victorious without the direct help and simultaneous offensive of the liberation movement in the colonial countries and, moreover, that the colonial problem would be solved as soon as Europe became a proletarian continent. The possibility that capitalism would survive and grow in the colonies and the rest of the world and in a short time come into conflict with Socialist Europe was not considered by the earlier Socialists. "Leninism maintains that the national problem can be solved only in connection with and on the basis of the proletarian revolution, and that the road to victory of the revolution in the West lies

[1] J. Stalin, *Problems of Leninism*, Pp. 50-51.
[2] Ibid., p. 51.

through the revolutionary alliance with the liberation movement of the colonies and dependent countries against imperialism. The national problem is a part of the general problem of the proletarian revolution, a part of the problem of the dictatorship of the proletariat."[1]

Two historical tendencies, according to Lenin, are discernible in the national problem. The first is "the awakening of national life and of national movements, the struggle against all national oppression and the creation of national states." The second, resulting from the processes of the first, is "the development and growing frequency of all sorts of intercourse among the nations ; the breaking down of national barriers ; the creation of the international unity of capital, of economic life in general, of politics, of science, and so forth. Both tendencies are the universal law of capitalism." (Lenin). The *thesis* of capitalism, of which the most developed ("the highest") form is imperialism, generates within its content the *antithesis* of national liberation and results in the *synthesis* of a Socialist world order.

Lenin and Stalin foresaw in the headlong rush of rival national capitalisms for competition and hold on colonial markets the impending doom of bourgeois states and the development of a situation in which "one or another nationality in Russia may find it necessary to raise and settle the question of its independence." After the February Revolution this hour had arrived. The Party based its national programme on the policy laid down by Stalin in 1913. The main features of this programme were:

1. The right of all the nations forming part of the Russian state freely to secede and form independent states must be recognised. To deny this right or to fail to take measures guaranteeing its practical realisation is equivalent to supporting a policy of seizure and annexation. It is, however, for the proletariat of a nation to decide whether it will secede or remain together with other nations in a Socialist State.

2. There should be, for every nationality, broad regional autonomy, the abolition of supervision from above, the abolition of a compulsory state language and the fixing of the boundaries of the

[1] J Stalin, *Problems of Leninism*, p. 52.

self-governing and autonomous regions by the local population itself, according to the economic and social conditions, the national composition of the people etc.

3. "National autonomy" is rejected on the grounds that it is the product of bourgeois considerations and that, by harping on an individualistic past with its support of the ruling classes, it misleads the working class into a complete misunderstanding of its role.[1]

4. The constitution shall have a fundamental law annulling all privileges enjoyed by any nation whatsoever and all infringements of the rights of national minorities.

5. All the nationalities of the Russian State should have common proletarian organisations, political, trade-union, educational etc. for only such organisations can break down the mental fences put up by the idea of nationalism.

In appraising this programme two facts have to be considered. First, the feelings of the non-Russian nationalities under the rule of the Czar, and secondly, the attitude of the Russian capitalists and petty bourgeoisie who held the power of the State in their hands. As to the first point, Poland and Finland were very bitter against the Russians who, so far at least as the first-named was concerned, had proved to be the worst oppressors. Hatred of the imperial power was at the blazing point, and the fact that the Czarist regime had ended did not make much difference. The Polish landowners and aristocracy, who made up the leadership of the nationalist revolt

[1] "While you (the British) protect your own distinctive culture by segregating it, by insulating yourselves as far as possible from native influences, we endeavour to raise the cultural condition of our more primitive peoples up to the level of our more advanced, at the same time as the entire mass moves forward. . . . Ours is the contrary ideal of a universal culture shareable, and increasingly shared, by all peoples whatever their present cultural condition ; a universal culture in which the Socialist content shall be developed, supplemented, diversified and enriched by assuming many different forms and modes of expression corresponding to the difference of language, manners and customs among our various ethnic groups ; a universal culture which shall be an endless series of native variations, interpretations and extensions of the central socialist theme or reading of life."—Leonard Barnes, *Soviet Light on the Colonies*, P. 192.

against Russian domination, knew that if the Czar had gone, the class whose puppet he was had come openly into power and that instead of the dawn of their freedom having arrived, their subservience would be perpetuated. The Bolsheviks' offer of the right to secede was not seriously taken by the Polish and Finnish gentry because, first, they were not in power then and secondly, because they did not believe that any party within the oppressing nation could be sincere in its equalitarian professions. But as the Bolsheviks came into power, they discovered that these "godless beasts" meant what they said. Quick as they were to take advantage of the offer to secede, they at the same time discovered that large masses of their workers and peasants leant towards Socialism and a multi-national State controlled by the proletariat. Henceforward, Soviet Russia remained the *bete noire* of the Polish and Finnish gentry. Of their unvarying hostility we have enough evidence between 1918 and 1945. Other nationalities in the south joined the Workers' State though the landlords and petty bourgeoisie in the Ukraine, Caucasus and the Don basin attempted to raise revolts against Socialist rule under the inspiration of arms and money supplied by international capital. In Central Asia the Emirs of Khiva and Bokhara had found it profitable to remain protected by the Czarist power. The February Revolution had shifted power from the hands of aristocrats to those of industrialists and capitalists, a change from Twiddledam to Twiddledee. And the industrialists always could pay better in taxes and concessions ; also they had not even recalled the Czar's envoys from the Emirates. So the Princes found no cause for worry, all unconscious of the ferment that was being caused by the young folk who had imbibed the doctrine of liberal republicanism earlier and were now being insidiously permeated by Communist ideology. Siberia, 80 per cent Great Russian, went the way of the Russians themselves.

In Great Russia (now embodying the R.S.F.S.R. excluding Siberia) itself there was a sharp cleavage of opinion over the national question. The Provisional Government was frankly actuated by imperialist designs. It wanted not only to continue rulership over

the ex-Czar's empire (in Churchillian phraseology, *to hold what they had*), but to annex, as spoils of the war, slices of Asia Minor, Persia, Southern Europe and China. Within the Soviets the Mensheviks and the Social Revolutionaries were opposed to the Bolsheviks' recognition of equality of "forward" and "backward" nations and the right of all oppressed nationalities to secede. Their arguments were essentially similar to those advanced by British socialists on the question of India's independence. They thought their superior culture entitled them to superior rights over the pastoral and agricultural people of the "backward" areas. They were believers in the doctrine of Great-Russian paramountcy and even though they paid lip allegiance to the principle of national cultural economy, they really believed that it was their duty to Russify the eastern colonial peoples and asphyxiate, by moral and legislative pressure, the native culture of the colonies. Even within the Bolshevik Party there were elements that believed in such a policy.

Lenin called these elements within and outside the party "national chauvinists" and effectively exposed them. The Bolsheviks made it one of their main tasks to encourage the colonial resentment at the Czarist Government's policy of Russification ("hellenising the barbarians") so as to get the support of the colonials for the Revolution. In fact, the support of the progressive nationalist element in Turkestan, which wanted the overthrow of Czarist overrulership as well as the feudal tyranny of Emirs and Beks, was to a great extent contributory to the success of the Bolshevik Revolution.

At the same time, it must be mentioned that the Bolsheviks, before and on assuming the power of the state, had to contend with a big amount of distrust towards Great-Russians, who formed the main bulk of the membership of the Party. The memories of Czarist oppressions did not die. On the other hand, they passed into legends. This is human character, particularly that of ignorant and superstitious people. A reference to Indian history may be made here to furnish a parallel. The Muslims held imperial sway over India till about two centuries ago. They were oppressive

rulers but not more so than other feudal ruling authorities in Europe, Asia and Africa at the time. All Muslims were not rulers ; in fact, by far the larger number of Muslims in India were themselves victims of the rulers' oppressions. Yet despite the passage of years and the common disability of foreign domination there has been imbedded into the heart of the Hindu intelligentsia a feeling of distrust, fear and contempt for the Muslims, which is wholly unjustified. There are, of course, a number of extraneous factors which have helped this feeling. The Hindu priestly element, the privileged landowning classes and the manoeuvrings of the imperialist foreign Power to create divisions—all have had their part in the creation of a psychological complex to mask and conceal a problem which is essentially economic in character. While the real class character of the problem is sought to be concealed, the bourgeois and petty bourgeois sections of the Hindu and Muslim communities prefer fighting each other out of the political arena with the support (as they think) of the occupying Power to enjoying freedom.

Of this distrust, bordering on hatred of Russians, Lenin was perhaps better aware than any other Bolshevik leader barring Stalin. He saw the necessity of a carefully planned campaign with a complete strategy and fully developed tactics in order to remove this distrust and awaken the masses to a realisation of the class character of their sufferings and the need for Socialism. The Bolsheviks were, in the first instance, to give active support to the elements that were *potentially* revolutionary, that is, elements that were striving to secure national liberation from Czarist rule and the esablishment of a liberal-bourgeois government. In the second instance, they were to *explain* to the masses the significance of a Socialist state. This educational process, Lenin emphasised, would not take long, for under the stress of a revolution people learn and understand in a week things that it would have taken them years to grasp in other times. Thirdly, the Bolsheviks were to go out and live among these people and by their behaviour *prove* that there were no reservations in the equality of, say, a Great Russian with a Tadjik, an Uzbek, a Tartar nomad or a Yakut. In

the eyes of a nation or a community conscious of its backwardness and resentful of being treated as inferior there can be no better test of equality than the capacity of the so-called "higher" nation or community to live with and among them on the same terms, eating the same food and following the same habits of life. This, then, was the task set for the Bolsheviks in Asia. It was a much more difficult task than what confronts the Christian missionary among the South Sea islanders and a very much more difficult one than what the Indian pseudo-revolutionary is prepared to face.

CHAPTER VI

THE STRATEGY OF THE CAMPAIGN

EVEN when the Communist leaders of the Revolution enjoined the very hard task on Russian Communists working in the Far East, they knew perfectly well that no one from outside, however sincere and earnest, could build a revolution, and that the urge for a revolution must come from within the people, from within the conscious core of the common people. For this reason not only were the Communists working in Turkestan exhorted "to make every effort to establish, by example, by deed, comradely relations with the peoples of Turkestan, to prove to them by your acts the sincerity of your desire to eradicate all traces of Great-Russian imperialism, to struggle tenaciously against world imperialism, with British imperialism at the head of it,"[1] but every effort was made to train up the local youth, who would be listened to without the initial handicap of distrust, in understanding and propagating the message of the Revolution and the Socialist brotherhood of man. To the oppressed non-Russian nationalities a Russian meant a member of the foreign ruling class, whatever his political, social or religious faith might be and whether he was a Grand Duke or a Bolshevik

[1] Lenin, *To the Communist Comrades in Turkestan*, Nov. 1919.

comrade.[1] That the psychological complex of superiority was not completely absent in the minds of many Russian Communists was admitted by Stalin himself. "The position of the Great-Russian nation, which was the dominant nation, has left its traces even on the Russian Communists, who are unable, or unwilling, to establish closer contact with the toiling native masses, to comprehend their needs and to help them emerge from their backward and uncivilised state. I am referring to those *not very numerous* groups of Russian Communists who, ignoring in their work the peculiarities of social life and culture in border regions, at times tend towards Russian Great-Power chauvinism.[2]

Similarly, the psychological inferiority complex of the non-Russian nationalities had also influenced the beliefs of a number of native Communists, who were "at times unable to distinguish the class interests of the toiling masses from the socalled 'national' interests." Stalin particularly referred to the leaning towards local, native nationalism which in the East expressed itself in Pan-Turkism.[3]

In considering the Communist strategy of uplift of the non-European nationalities one should always remember the point stressed time and again by Stalin that these had not passed through a period of industrial capitalism and therefore did not possess an industrial proletariat. The industrial proletariat, on account of the regimentation of its labour, develops an altogether different social and economic organisation from that of agricultural labour and, on account of its different habits of thought and living, can comprehend the class character of its revolutionary struggle far more directly and easily than the other variety of labourers. The task of the revolutionary party, now in power, was to lift them from primitive

[1] We see something of this feeling in India, where the Hindus are distrusted by the Muslims, predominantly agricultural labourers, for the reason that the petty bourgeoisie is largely Hindu by religion and acts in a manner increasing their poverty.

[2] Stalin, *Report to the 10th Congress of the Communist Party* (*B*), 1921.

[3] Ibid.

forms of economy into the stage of Soviet Socialist economy without touching at the intermediate stage of Capitalist economy. Here was a job of work not specifically foreseen by Marx and Engels, which had to be shouldered by Lenin and Stalin on their own initiative.

The Bolshevik Party's strategy of revolution as well as developments in the war situation both interacted on the accomplishment of this job.

The October Revolution of 1917 which placed the Bolsheviks in power in Great Russia had a stormy birth. Up to the first quarter of 1921 the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic was engrossed in fighting off foreign intervention and civil war. It was only then that full attention to the problem of dealing with the backward peoples of the former Russian Empire could be given. Soviet Russia (R.S.F.S.R.) had already in 1917 granted to the nationalities and the colonies the right to secede but except for the Baltic States and Poland (all in the clutches of intrigue of Anglo-French imperialist interests), and the predominantly Turkish area in southern Armenia all of them wanted to remain attached to Soviet Russia. At the end of the intervention and civil war the Bolshevik leaders discovered that the national problem had grown into a general problem of the colonies. The Czarist Empire was, like the British, a national-colonial empire. Certain nationalities, e.g., the Great Russian, Ukrainian, Byelorussian, Don Cossack and Crimean, had by long association with the original ruling nation become collateral arms of the empire, just as the Scots and the Welsh have merged with the conquering English to become the British imperial nation. Certain other nationalities—the backward ones—had a colonial status. But when the extraordinary stress of the war of 1914 came, these so-called "superior" ruling nations found that they had not strength enough to defend themselves and the colonial countries from which they sucked in prosperity for themselves. They were obliged to appeal to the colonies for men, arms and other forms of assistance, and to attract and interest them they made a number of grandiose promises of freedom *after* the war which they never meant to honour. But the appeal and the

promises had the effect of awakening in the colonial peoples a desire for freedom and a realisation of their untried capacities.

Moreover, during the war the Allied Powers had made a secret allotment among themselves of portions of the Turkish Empire in the event of victory. Britain, France, Italy and Russia were to be the recipients of this loot. The Russian Revolution not only upset this pleasant apple-cart but it made the hypocritical Allies look very foolish by disclosing the whole ignoble pact, renouncing all Czarist claims on Turkish territory and repudiating all secret treaties of annexation. Foiled in their nefarious plans, Britain and France worked up the Greek military dictator Venizelos to invade Smyrna. This underground scheming for the dismemberment of the Turkish Empire, including the national home of the Turkish people, had an unexpected effect upon the Turks as well as all over the Muslim world. The Turks successfully raised the banner of revolt and the Muslim peoples of the East, who traditionally looked upon Turkey as the holy of holies on earth, were roused to a sense of hostility towards imperialism as the root cause of all this flagrant and scandalous highwaymanship. The integrity of the Turkish nation became a moral cause and an extension of its ethical arguments made the self-determination of every oppressed nation a democratic cause.

Last but no least was the emergence of Soviet Russia as a new and shining example. That a country of peasants and millhands would succeed in driving away its monarch and the whole hierarchy of aristocrats and capitalistic exploiters, repel outside aggression and put down revolts by skilled generals and trained, well-equipped armies was an object-lesson to all colonial sufferers. They were encouraged, heartened and inevitably drawn to the doctrine of revolution, and they looked forward to a common union under the guidance, and on the lines, of Soviet Russia. Thus was created, to quote Stalin, "a united front of oppressed nationalities from Ireland to India." The non-Russian nationalities, particularly the Muslim peoples, of the former Czarist Empire had found themselves in the advantageous position of finding the weight of an alien ruling authority gone and themselves free to choose their own form

of government. The protecting Czarist power being absent, the Khans and beys and mullahs and kulaks proved to be like a barricade with no snipers behind them.

Before proceeding to dwell on the sequence of events, it is necessary to go a little more closely into the grounds of the Bolshevik strategy. We have already dwelt on the paramount importance placed on equality between the "advanced" and the "backward" peoples. It was based on the conviction that the difference between a developed and an undeveloped nation was not inherent, that the latter represented merely a case of deprivation of the highest culture and certainly not incapacity for it, and that once the latter had a full opportunity for acquisition of culture it would be no less capable than the most advanced European nations of promoting a truly progressive culture and civilisation within a very brief period. History supports this view. In the United States of America, for example, there was during the last portion of the 19th century a large influx of immigrants from the different European countries, most of them illiterate, ignorant and profoundly superstitious people belonging mainly to the superfluous agricultural labouring class. They found political freedom and an opportunity for employment, though nothing like economic equality ; and in course of one generation and backwardness had vanished. And not only backwardness but their distinctive national traits too. Norwegian and Turk, Irish and Russian were transformed into the common American.

Under a common social system, such as participation in a common economic order enforces, the rugged individualities of tribe and nationality tend steadily to disappear. And if this common order be founded in the free will of masses of the peoples, the result inevitably is the emergence of a common basic culture, a common outlook on the fundamental problems of social existence among the different nations. One begins by freeing the peoples from external control and founding a people's national state. The second stage is federation with people's national states in the neighbourhood. The third is a gradual deletion of the national frontier as co-operation among the nations extends and as their inter-communication

becomes easier and easier. In the end we have a universal culture only limited by considerations of language and geographical conditions. These limitations, too, are likely to disappear in course of time, as the present tendency in the Soviet Union testifies. The ultimate result is a universal race—the race of man—with a completely universal culture. To-day the world is, indeed, far off from that happy culmination, but the resounding success of the Soviet Union's effort (I advisedly do not use the term *experiment*, I shall later explain why) together with the Western world's sharp and rapid progress to the Left is no uncertain indication of its inevitability and the inexorable tendency of history towards it.

We have already seen that the core of the Revolution was the Communist Party and that its strength at the time of the Revolution lay in the cities west of the Urals. In Central Asia its strength numerically was negligible and its influence intangible. What was the magic thread that bound Leningrad and Samarkand in an unbreakable tie? That thread was the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. The name has evoked very different but equally profound reactions from different classes of people. It has horrified and terrified some while it has encouraged, enlivened and ennobled others. Let no one judge it by its cheap imitators in other countries who have plagiarised the name without being able to emulate the selflessness, courage and faith of its adherents. If their discipline was superb, so was their faith in the inevitability and imminence of the social revolution in the Czarist Empire. The unceremonious manner in which Lenin, knowing full well that the position of the Bolshevik Party at the February Revolution was that of a small minority, rejected the Mensheviks' and Social Democrats' invitation to work together was characteristic of the great man that he was ; at the same time, it was also characteristic of the militant self-confidence of the Bolshevik Party. He believed, and his followers believed, in the imperishable truth of the teachings of Marx, in the economic interpretation of history, in the class character of the world's struggle and in the inevitability of a Communist social order. The establishment of such an order is a historical necessity and as soon as the appropriate conditions have been evolved in the process of

history it would not matter how strong the vanguard was in number ; the tide of revolution would carry it forward. But what was needed of the Party was that it must be able to interpret the revolution to the masses, give the signal when the time comes for the overthrow of capitalism, see that the dictatorship of the proletariat was established and that the rule of the working-class did not deviate from the straight path of progress towards the evolution of a classless society. The Communist Party required of its membership the strictest obedience, the highest self-sacrifice and the utmost freedom from corruptability. No wonder, therefore, that it was numerically small. Its past sufferings and sacrifices endeared it to the masses of the peasantry and industrial workers alike, while its programme of nationalisation of field, factory and workshop evoked their fanatic support.

This is one of the secrets of success of the revolution in Central Asia.

As was remarked in the beginning of this chapter, the Communist leaders of the Revolution had realised the necessity of training up Marxist cadres and Party members from among the native population of the backward nationalities. A revolution cannot be imported from outside ; the effort must come from the people concerned. By the time the wars of intervention had ended, i.e., in 1921, the KUTV (the Communist University of the Toiling East) was founded in Moscow. The pupils at the University were all drawn from the Eastern nationalities. By 1923 the results had been so successful that it was decided that the work of Soviet construction had henceforward to be handed over to the local Party organisations of the former colonies themselves. The KUTV is, however, more than a Marxian university for the peoples of the Soviet East. It also admits Marxist pupils of colonial and dependent Eastern countries which are outside the Soviet Union. The tasks of this University in respect of the Soviet Republics of Asia were defined by Stalin as fivefold. These are broadbased on the fundamental Socialist task, *viz.*, "to help the workers and peasants of these republics to become fellow-builders of socialism in *our* country ; to create and develop conditions in accordance with the specific

circumstances of the life of each of these republics that will promote and accelerate this fellowship."[1] The specific tasks were:

(1) To create industrial centres as bases for rallying the peasants around the working class.

(2) To advance agriculture and above all, irrigation. In Central Asian conditions this meant primarily irrigation.

(3) To develop co-operative organisation among the masses of peasants of handicraftsmen as the most reliable way of bringing the Soviet republics in the East into the general system of Soviet economic development.

(4) To bring the Soviets into organic touch with the masses, to make them *national* in composition and in this way be near and comprehensible to the working masses.

(5) To develop national culture ; to build up a wide system of courses and schools for both general education and vocational and technical training, teaching in the native languages, with a view to training Soviet, Party, trade union and economic cadres from among the native peoples.

Imagine the British, French, Belgian or South African imperialists opening similar institutions for their colonial subjects or suppressed peoples! Like Mark Anthony, they would rather "let Rome in Tiber melt" than nationalise those peoples' social relationships.

It must not be forgotten that the KUTV is a special university for workers in the Eastern countries and that it turns out men and women each of whom becomes a sort of a Communist centre in the localities in which each works, drawing around him or her the local youth and always explaining, elucidating and teaching the principles of Communism and watching that each Soviet did its duty. The other universities of the West have remained quite open to such Eastern students as come along for higher studies. So rapid has been the growth of education in

[1] Stalin, *Address to the students of the KUTV*, 1925.

Soviet Asia that notwithstanding the establishment of universities in each republic the trek of seekers of knowledge westwards has not stopped nor even been considerably reduced.

A second factor in the Communist strategy, making for the stability of the multi-national state, is the organisation of the Trade Unions. In the Soviet Union this organisation is based on a different principle from Trade Unions in other countries. An industrial establishment, taken wholesale, is regarded as a single unit, and every employee from the workshop foreman to the medical officer belongs to it. Thus, for example, a carpenter in an automobile factory in the U.S.S.R. will be in the motor workers' union, while a carpenter in a furniture workshop will belong to the woodcraftmen's union. Moreover—and this is important from our point of view—the first carpenter will be a member of the motor workers' union of the U.S.S.R., and the second a member of the woodcraftmen's union of the U.S.S.R., for in the whole of the Soviet Union there can be only one union for the personnel of every establishment producing the same commodity or service. The Trade Unions are a second thread running through the national republics constituting the Soviet State, because they bind in membership all workers from Leningrad to Vladivostok and from Archangel to Stalinabad in the Pamirs. These unions cover all employees of the State, the local authorities, the trusts and the consumers' cooperatives, whether they are engaged in mining or agriculture, in manufacture, in transport, in distribution, or in providing administrative or cultural services. This body is called upon to fulfil the workers' part of the National Plan and its all-Union or, in other words, international character is a guarantee of the solidarity of the workers of the Soviet Union and the cohesion of the component nationalities.

In the context of Soviet Asia, the Trade Union organisation at the beginning did not come into play because neither agriculture nor industries nor distribution nor public services were organised at that time. But as the organisation of the various forms of social activity proceeded apace, the trade unions grew up. Equal pay for equal work without restriction for nationality and sex, and

the eligibility of persons of all nationalities to perfect equality and full membership all over the U.S.S.R. encourage the workers to think more on international than on narrow national lines. The Soviet Union's plan of uplift was based on rapid industrialisation of the whole State, and the prime need of the moment was to train up as many skilled workers as was humanly possible. This cadre was drawn, not from the already advanced West, but mainly from the backward East. For a successful Socialist state a proletariat must be the basis. Apart from the economic aim of raising standards of living in the backward countries, the makers of the Soviet Union decided on proletarianising the East, and then binding them in ties of common interest that reached far beyond their geographical national frontiers to make, for the time being, the Soviet Socialist Republican Federation safe from enemies within and without, and finally, to give revolutionary reality to the banner of battle raised aloft by Marx and Engels—"Workers of the world, unite!"

CHAPTER VII

THE BATTLEGROUND OF TURKESTAN

AT the time of the Revolution, Emir Saeed Mir Aleem Khan was on the throne of Bokhara, which comprised roughly about one-half of Turkestan. He was a rich man even by the fantastic standards of medieval Muslim kings, and his investments in Russian financial and industrial enterprises were valued well over 100 million roubles. The Russian conquest, like the British annexation of India, had not interfered with the religious-feudal structure of society. There was complete religious "freedom" and preservation of Muslim (very different from Islamic ; the former is the *mullah*-ic order, the latter that of the Prophet) traditions. The Emir embodied in his sacred person the whole function of the State —he was the highest religious divine and the highest executive,

judicial, military, commercial, financial authority all rolled into one. He exercised these functions through a set of hereditary nobles and so long as they brought him his revenues, he did not care to know how the kingdom was governed. These latter ruled through another class of intermediaries between the peasant and the small merchant—a hereditary middle class in towns and villages, comprising the *mullahs*, the *kazis* who dispensed purchaseable justice, the police and the rural landlord, called the *bey* or *bek*. In a predominantly agricultural country like Turkestan the bey, like the *zemindars* and *tehsildars* of India a score of years ago, exercised almost unlimited powers. They were generally chiefs of tribes and the main props of the Emir's authority. They owned the lands and the peasantry were tenants-at-will—the bey's will, of course—being entitled to only a fourth of the land's produce and subjected to the sufferance of all the oppressions of the landlord. In the urban areas, not numerous but important because they held the aristocracy, the secondary centres of power, the trading community was an arm of the middle class. There being no industries controlled by the natives, their community was almost entirely dependent upon the Russian industrialists, who used them as agents for the purchase of raw materials from, and the distribution of finished products to, the native population. There was no proletariat. Only in Kogan in the suburbs of Bokhara (called the New City) were there a few mills owned by Russian capitalists and run by Russian labourers. These last and the Russian railroad workers talked of workmen's rights and whispered about Socialism and revolution. Native labour was hardly interested in these things, for had not the local interpreters of Islam condemned such notions as poison? True, the prophet of Islam had in his time established a brotherhood of equality in a faction-ridden, broken up and superstitious Arabia. But in a country which held less than one percent literates, who knew what the Prophet had said and done? What the less than one per cent said passed for Scripture.

Also, there were the *Djadids* (the New), who comprised a small fraction of the sprinkling of literates and who had imbibed

some of the reformative ideas of the Russians as a result of the upheaval of the abortive revolution of 1905. Ideas filtered from Moscow into the Caucasus and from there, through invisible routes, into the fortress of reaction in the heart of Asia. The Djadids started as "a purely cultural, legal movement agitating for secular education and a few minor administrative reforms" but soon "developed into a genuine underground organization with a considerable membership, several branches and numerous sympathisers from among the most progressive nationalist elements in the Khanate. This change came primarily in response to the stimulus of the Turkish and Persian revolutions in 1908."[1] The Djadids now began to press for some secularisation of the administration, reduced taxes (there was a tax on each human creature's head) and organised collection of taxes so as to lessen the burden of oppression on the peasantry. They wanted the Emir to permit the unhampered development of native capital. They dreamt of a bourgeois-democratic constitution, such as the Young Turks before the last War had dreamt of. The Emir, however, was so loyal to the Russians and so mindful of his own absolute sovereignty that he replied by suppressing the Djadids. It was as well that he acted so, for if he had conceded their demands, he would have had in 1917 whole classes of capitalists and petty bourgeoisie to back him in his resistance to the Bolsheviks. As it was, he was feared and hated by all who wanted progress—rich, middling and poor alike.

The February Revolution in Leningrad, symbolised by the overthrow of the Czar and the end of the hereditary nobility, seemed to the Djadids like the realisation of a wonderful dream. They believed that the new Republican Government of Russia would grant them the reforms for which they had so long agitated. These poor hopefuls suffered from the delusion that once the lion had been deposed, the wolves of the high forest would fraternise with the jackals of the lower forest. The would-be bourgeoisie of Bokhara never knew that the Russian bourgeoisie in power

[1] Joshua Kunitz, *Dawn Over Samarkand*, p. 45.

would be more ruthless and thorough in their exploitation of the resources of Turkestan and that if there were going to be any reforms, they would be in favour, not of the Bokharan, but of the Russian capitalists. They could have drawn instructive lessons from the history of India, where the transference of ruling authority from the hands of the East India Company to those of the British Parliament (a democratic body!) had resulted, not in greater freedom for the native population, but in more systematic and ruthless exploitation and more complete economic slavery for the people. The British did not disturb the feudal structure of the country and had not interfered with the religious and cultural autonomy of the sects and peoples of India, just so long as these had not touched the British capitalist's exploitation of the country. The first "constitutional" reforms (1909), very minor as they were, took nearly half a century to come. Even then they merely perpetuated the British economic hold on the country. In their high hopefulness the Djadids ignored the lessons of history and looked to the Provisional Government to help them at the latter's own cost.

The Provisional Government, of course, urged immediate reform. But it urged the Emir and the Russian representative at Bokhara, and not the politically minded Bokharans. The reforms mooted by the Emir amounted to municipal self-government for the city of Bokhara and no more. The Djadids objected and had a hiding from the Emir's men. They would have fared worse if the Russian workers in Kogan, with a handful of native revolutionary colleagues, had not organised a protest. The Emir, who had no desire for embroiling the Russians, relented a little. But he was still the object of the superstitious veneration of the uneducated masses and he felt he could deal with the Djadids in a less ostentatious but equally thorough manner. In the meantime, however, the industrial workers of Kogan and the Russian soldiers had established a Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies at Kogan and had joined the Djadids. This Soviet was not predominated by the Bolsheviks at the beginning, but the few Marxists it had were able to exert a powerful influence on the

younger section of the Djadids. A deputation to the Emir and the Provisional Government's representative was scornfully treated and its members were detained in the Royal Palace. The Emir designated them as subversive men and traitors, and got the mob up against them. But the Soviet of Kogan got scent of the Emir's intention, marched into the capital and got the workers safely out.

This was the signal for a parting of ways between the Emir and the progressives and between the Rightists and Leftists among the Djadids. The latter saw the impossibility of wresting any real reforms from the Provisional Government and some of them at least saw the Provisional Government as it really was— a ramshackle hut in a desert storm. These saw also that the Emir must go, and not only the Emir but the whole hierarchy of the feudal bourgeoisie, that the peasant and the worker must come into their heritage and that nothing short of a Socialist national state, as was being worked for by the Bolsheviks, would do for Turkestan. With these was formed the Young Bokharan Party. Its preaching slowly infiltrated into the Emir's army and the handicraft-workers and transport workers in the cities.

The revolt against the Emir was gathering shape in the urban areas but had hardly reached the rural masses. But news of the fall of the Czar and of strange goings-on in the capital reached them in exaggerated details and between March and October, 1917 they came to learn to associate the Emir and his administration, symbolised by the bey, with their misery. It was beyond their dreams as yet to claim the land as their own to keep and govern as they thought best. So far as the sacred person of the Emir and his rule were concerned, "sufferance was the badge of their tribe" ; but between tribe and tribe or clan and clan or sect and sect there was valiance in fighting, daring in robbery and aggressiveness in assault. The rage and hatred that accumulated in the heart of the rugged peasant found vent in tribal vendettas that were handed down as a precious heritage from one generation to another.

It was at this juncture that the October Revolution took place in Russia. The new Bolshevik Government announced the liquidation of the Russian Empire, the liberation of the subject nations, the "equality and sovereignty" of all the peoples, their right of self-determination and secession and formation of independent States, "the abolition of all national and national-religious privileges and restrictions" and "the free development of national minorities and ethnographic groups inhabiting Russian territory." Two days after this announcement came to the "Mahommedans of Russia and the Orient" a joint appeal signed by Lenin and Stalin (names not yet very well known but already feared), telling them that they were free to exercise their rights as the Russian people had come to exercise theirs through Soviets of their own chosen representatives.

The October Revolution and the appeal started a fire in a damp haystack. The fire crawled rather than broke out in a widespread conflagration. The Emir was profoundly disturbed. He felt his position crumbling, for the establishment of the Bolshevik regime in Russia had struck at the root of his authority and had completely ignored him. It would not deal with him but with the people, *i.e.*, with the thrice-cursed revolutionary element, namely, the Young Bokharans and the labourers, who were only good for lashes. He rallied all his forces—soldiers, police, merchants, divines, mullahs, beys, kazis (unpaid judges) and free-lance brigands from professionally warlike tribes—to stem the rush of upsurging low-borns. In this he was joined by the reformist Djadids who had wanted a liberal-bourgeois government for Bokhara for the enrichment of their class. Rather than suffering the Bolsheviks they would suffer the Emir and his couple of hundred concubines and the nobles, the divines and the beys with their dozens of them.

Both these parties had another shining hope ; they believed strongly in the absorbent capacity of the British Empire. The old rivalry of the British and the Russian Empires for the control of the Middle East and the recent repudiation by the Bolshevik Government of the British investments in Russian private industries

and public loans were counted upon as sufficient grounds for Britain to intervene and actively side against the Bolsheviks. Neither the Emir nor his counsellors and adherents nor the old Djadids with bourgeois aspirations thought twice about inviting new masters in the shape of the British so long as their profits were guaranteed. Nor did they think twice about resisting freedom if it were to be enjoyed equally by themselves and the riff-raff.

In the meantime, the semi-desert between the Emir's territory and Siberia, now comprising the Soviet Republic of Kazakhstan, which was colonised by Russian peasants who had driven off its nomadic tribal aborigines from many areas, had been incorporated into the Federated Soviet Republic. The infiltration of Bolsheviks from the north was a danger. The Emir, therefore, broke off relations with the Bolshevik Government and ordered the beheading of those who would keep contact with them. He sent emissaries to the White Russians and the British Government and the Emir of Afghanistan and taxed his subjects the heavier in order to repress them the better with the help of mercenaries. The Bokharan revolutionaries in their turn made contact with Kolesov, chairman of the Soviets in Turkestan (as the Kazakh Republic was originally called) ; but this republic was itself so full of its own struggle for existence that it could not come to the aid of the Bokharan comrades.

The position of the revolutionaries was, indeed, very difficult. They were a handful of men in the cities and towns. The peasantry had a deep-rooted distrust of Russians, and these revolutionaries who fraternised with them and wanted to educate them were, therefore, suspect in the eyes of the superstitious masses. "The cardinal task of a proletarian revolutionary party in a colonial peasant country is to attract the peasant masses, to wean them away from reactionary, feudal and clerical influences ; is, in short, to revolutionise that most potent, though ordinarily inert, stratum of society. In contradiction to the technique of the imperialists, who cooperate with the native rulers in exploiting the native masses, the technique of the Bolshevik posits unqualified co-operation with the native masses in eradicating both foreign and native capi-

talist exploiters. This is an exceedingly exacting technique and calls for a highly experienced, homogeneous and genuinely revolutionary organisation and leadership . . . . In Central Asia, especially, the Bolsheviks needed great diplomatic skill, for the influential native ruling groups were cleverly utilizing the prevailing fear and hatred of the Russians for their own purposes. As against the Bolsheviks' class slogans, they appealed to the nationalist, religious and family loyalties and prejudices of the ignorant and fanatical natives. This was so everywhere—in Tashkent, in Khiva, in Khokand and, of course, in Bokhara."[1]

The early Bolsheviks made many mistakes of policy and procedure. They were imbued with a sense of superiority that was almost fatal to the cause. In Soviet Turkestan this and the failure of the Revolutionary Government to break up the old Government and the native ruling class and their compromise with other so-called Left parties made the Bolshevik position very weak. Moreover, shortly after the Revolution General Dutov with a strong army of Whites captured Orenburg, a vital station on the Moscow-Tashkent railway. This railway being the only means of direct communication between Russia and Central Asia, Turkestan was virtually cut off from Russian help and supplies. At the same time an anti-Bolshevik "national government" was set up at Khokand headed by the local cotton capitalists. It made common cause with the Emir and the White Russians and got into touch with the agents of the British Empire. Bolshevism was almost swamped.

The Khokand caucus, however, carried in its own body the germs of its dissolution. It had to accommodate the landlords and the divines in order to win the masses, and these elements soon began to bid for more power. The conflict grew as the workers and the peasantry, represented on the Government by a Right-wing "Moslem Workers' and Warriors' Congress," increased in power. As the Khokand Government was preparing to strike at the Reds of Tashkent, this Congress seized the Khokand State Bank and confiscated the funds of the capitalists. The landlords and divines,

[1] Joshua Kunitz, *Dawn Over Samarkand*, Pp 72-73.

too, thought this the best hour to strike, and on February 18, 1918 they led a revolt, seized the capitalist ministers and proceeded to finish off this "Congress." They might have succeeded but for the circumstance that at this very moment Kolesov's army had reached Khokand. In the ensuing battle the landlords' forces were defeated and put to flight.

The Khokand menace was liquidated. Next Kolesov marched on Bokhara but was outwitted by the Emir who at first sued for peace but, instead of disarming, made a surprise attack on the Red forces. Kolesov, defeated, withdrew to Tashkent. The Emir celebrated the victory with an extensive liquidation of the Bokharan revolutionaries. Moreover, the British had been operating from Persia ; their help made possible the overthrow of the Soviet administration at Ashkabad in summer. Meanwhile, in Khiva the Khanate was overrun by an adventurer named Junaid Khan who sacked the whole territory in true Jenghis-Khan style and was granted the friendship of the British and the Whites. Moreover, in Fergana, the hinterland between modern Uzbekistan, Kirghizia and Tadjikistan, there arose an armed insurrection of the *Basmachi* or the *Basmachs*. These were a phenomenon of the Czarist policy of exclusion of the surplus agricultural labouring population from employment in industries. These landless people took to brigandage for a living. They had no poltical aims, they only robbed and stole to keep themselves going. These were the original Basmachi. To these were added the fugitive remnants of the Khokand bourgeoisie and their dependants, who upon the fall of their "national government" took refuge in the hills and adopted guerilla tactics to fight the Soviets. Thus the Basmachi, from being the poorest section of the people, were converted into an opulent fighting band backed by the Muslim rich of Turkestan, the White Russians and the British. "The predominant elements in the Basmach bands of the post-October period were representatives of classes disinherited by the revolution. Also, the Basmach activities lost their purely elemental character: directed by the deposed leaders of the Khokand Republic and the English representatives stationed in Chinese Turkestan, they now became the co-ordinated efforts of a political

movement—*Basmachestvo* or Basmachism—with a definite political objective, the overthrow of the Soviet Government."[1]

Dutov's blockade of the Tashkent railway was a protracted one. Turkestan mainly produced cotton and imported foodgrains by this vital railway. Dutov saw that no food passed that way. As a result, there was a great scarcity of food. Huge stocks of cotton lay undisposed of and large masses of men became unemployed. Reactionary propaganda made the Bolsheviks responsible for all this misery and for many another fictitious blemishes like the closing of mosques and nationalisation of women. The revolution found too few friends and too many enemies.

It was at this moment that representatives of the British Government arrived in Turkestan on a "fact-finding" tour. Their real purpose, however, was to see if the vast stocks of cotton lying in Central Asia could be secured and transferred to Kashgar in Chinese Turkestan, thus paralysing the cotton industry of the Soviet Union and opening a way for direct help to the counter-revolutionaries. One of them was almost caught before he succeeded in fleeing into the protection of the Emir of Bokhara.

The years 1918 and nearly three-quarters of 1919 were on the whole years of great tribulation for the Bolsheviks in Central Asia. Before the much better supplied armies of the counter-revolution they were generally always on the retreat. Their men, the soldiers of the Revolution, who must shoulder the great task of the "making of Man" after the eventual victory of the Revolution, they could not spare to be killed or captured. Constantly on the move, without adequate food, clothing or shelter, they were kept up and invigorated by their faith in the cause, the inevitable victory of Socialism and the masses. The Whites, the Basmachi and the mercenaries of the noble Emir blazed their trail with loot, arson, rape ;

[1] Joshua Kunitz, *Dawn Over Samarkand*, p. 89. Sir John Maynard, in his *The Russian Peasant*, has another tentative explanation of the Basmachi. "The Basmachi of Central Asia, who appear to resemble the Hindusthani fanatics on the North-West frontier of India, include irreconcilables of all classes, who refuse to live in a country not governed by a Mohammedan ruler." (P. 389).

devastated villages, dead peasants and half-dead girls. On the other hand, the Reds fraternised with the peasants, shared their misery and gave them whatever help was possible. All the while they explained to the masses the need and character of Socialism. The result was a sort of primitive collective life organised on guerilla lines, the peasants outdoing the Basmachi, particularly in the Kirghiz mountains.[1] An underground infection was rapidly spreading among the peasantry.

Throughout the long series of defeats, very occasionally relieved by one or two victories in battle, with Dutov's grip on Orenburg not slackened for a moment, the Revolution was thawing on the surface but hardening below the level of vision. The very magnitude of the counter-revolutionary forces was helping the spread of the Revolution. The oppressive armies had to be fed and paid. The Emir taxed his landlords, the landlords taxed the beys and the beys robbed the peasants. In addition, wherever the forces went, they looted the homes and carried off booty and young women ; and in a mountain country with a relative scarcity of of women a healthy girl was considered a more useful chattel than a pair of oxen! Anyhow, the price of victory was added misery for the miserable peasant.

There was another reason for the permeation by seepage of the revolutionary idea. Central Asia lived on cotton ; today, of course, it lives almost wholly on its own produce of food. But in those days food came from the north and the west by the one railroad cut off by Dutov in return for cotton. Now for two years no cotton was going out and no food coming in. The peasant was forced to be idle, but his stomach was not, nor were the bey's revenues and the Emir's taxes. The villager never saw the Emir and very imperfectly understood the impersonal suction of that divine incubus. But the bey and his collectors he knew, and his grudge against the local vampires increased as rapidly as his impoverishment. He began to understand how, if he had been the owner of his own

[1] Interesting accounts of Red peasant guerillas have been quoted in Kunitz's *Dawn Over Samarkand*.

land, there would have been no bey and no oppression ; and the understanding hardened more and more into conviction with every successive despoliation. The petty bourgeoisie was also feeling the strain, for it was thrown out of employment and all the same had to pay the taxes and the levies. It wanted a speedy conclusion of the struggle. For the time being the party in power was the villain of the piece. At the same time, news infiltrated from Soviet Russia that the Bolshevik Government had been guaranteeing work for all and giving the non-Russians really equal terms and treating them more cordially than the Muslim Emir had ever treated his Muslim subjects. There was a progressive collapse of the moral reserves of the middle class against the Revolution. And in any country not industrially developed, that is, one without a large and organised proletariat, the middle class always plays a decisive part. The Emir did not know it, but the ground was being cut steadily off under his feet.

By the middle of June, 1919 the main support of the counter-revolutionaries was withdrawn by the Allied raising of the blockade of the Black Sea. Interventionist forces that had been landed in the Crimea, Transcaucasia and Transcaspia were withdrawn. About the same time the revulsion of feeling of the entire Muslim world against the designs of the Allies, and particularly against the British, began to manifest itself, first, in a widespread Khilafat movement, apparently aiming at the restoration of the Caliph of Turkey and his empire but in reality a movement of national awakening among the many Muslim nationalities under the direct or indirect subjection of other Powers the chief among whom, and at that time the most active, was the British. In Afghanistan, which was to be the base of the forthcoming British annexation of Central Asia, there was a successful revolt of the Muslims led by Amanulla Khan, who usurped the throne and followed a strongly anti-British policy throughout his reign. 300,000 men, British and Indian, ready for a triumphal march into Turkestan chafed in vain. Shortly afterwards, shocked by the murders of Jallianwallah Bagh in Amritsar in north-west India, there was deep and powerful unrest in India. The British

Government at home, too, was worried by its Labour critics. So it thought discretion the better part of valour and abandoned its none too veiled attempt to interfere in Turkestan.

In September, 1919 Dútov's army was routed by the Red Army of Turkestan. The blockade was ended, the railway freed and communications restored. At the same time, Kolchak's armies in Siberia were smashed. Red help along the railway began to pour in. To the peasant it meant that with a change of government the cotton trade could start afresh and food and help could come in again.

With the new year the turning of the table in favour of the Bolsheviks became swifter and swifter. Dutov and his collaborator in Turkestan, Annekov, were so effectively defeated that they fled into Chinese Turkestan. In Khiva, the Emir's friend Junaid, the upstart dictator, was being worsted in battle after battle with the Reds and their sympathisers who called themselves Young Khivans. Soon Junaid, instead of being the hunter that he was a year or so ago, became the hunted. A Revolutionary Government was organised and Junaid was chased into Persia with the remnants of his forces. The Government transformed itself into a Soviet government.

The Emir of Bokhara found all his legs turned into wet clay. He tried Amanullah, but that king had already given diplomatic recognition to the Soviet regime in Russia. Khiva was rapidly restoring order and giving the native peasants and workers plenty of work on equal terms with Russians. The peasants of Bokhara were rising, and this time the Emir felt himself squeezed for life. He appealed in vain to the British in Kashgar and offered to lay his realm and his vast hoard of wealth at their disposal. The British agents, however, declined the "remarkable offer". Finally, the revolutionaries in Bokhara rose in August, 1920. The cities fell one after another and early in September the palace at Bokhara was besieged, shelled and burnt. The Emir fled into Afghanistan and from there carried on intrigues for eleven years.

CHAPTER VIII

THE REVOLUTION IN PROCESS

THE flight of the Emir of Bokhara, the last symbol of medieval feudalism in Turkestan, marked the birth of the Revolution. By no means, however, did the event complete it, for a Revolution, like a human being, is an organic phenomenon of history. It has to pass through a dark period of gestation when the forces for the destruction of the main obstacles to the stream of human progress towards the apotheosis of a higher social order mature and take life in the social mind. The overthrow of the chief obstacles, like—as in the present case—the removal of the feudal ruling authority, marks its birth as a kicking infant. Then it matures, slowly or fast, according to the relative preparation of the army of the Revolution, namely, the organised masses. If there be a well-organised and strong proletariat, the struggle may be short, swift and perhaps not particularly violent. If, as was the case in Soviet Russia, the organised revolutionary mass be small, there must be a fairly prolonged internal and external struggle. And in a country with the rudiments of an industrial proletariat and of the revolutionary element the struggle between the determined forces of the Revolution and the small, medium and big vested interests must be a long protracted one.

In Central Asia the position, it must be remembered, was like this: It was completely under an agricultural-feudal economy and the Revolution there was possible of hatching only on account of the end of Czarism in Russia and the opportune establishment of the Soviet Socialist regime in that part of the Czar's former empire. If the Khanate of Bokhara had not been surrounded by Socialist republics to north and west, it is doubtful if the heterogeneous groups that combined to bring about the overthrow of the Emir and thus started off the process of the Revolution would have succeeded in another decade. Those who had worked for

the removal of the Emir did not belong to one party, nor were their political and social objectives similar by any means. There were republicans ; pan-Muslimites who dreamed of the establishment of a Muslim theocratic democracy for Turkestan on the model of the early Muslims and finally for all Mahomedan countries in Asia, Africa and Europe ; Socialists who believed that a not-yet-born capitalism in Central Asia could not be superseded by its successor, Socialism ; and Communists, members of the Bolshevik Party. Even the last-named, on whom the active leadership of the Revolution had devolved in its process, were not quite clear as to the next step. Socialist society was entirely a novel effort. It was clear in theory but hitherto without a precedent. And then, as Lenin had pointed out, a Revolution does not change human nature all at once, and the adjustment of means to the end in the light of environments needs careful effort and complete wakefulness. In Great Russia, for example, Lenin impressed on the Party just before the October Revolution that the immediate task was *not to effect the introduction of Socialism at once* but to prepare the ground for it by creating suitable conditions. Some enthusiasts, it is true, believed that the overthrow of tyranny and liberation of the people from the imperialist yoke was all that was necessary for the immediate establishment of a Socialist society. Such men of good faith and blind vision are to be found in every country. The fact is that submerged masses that have been coerced by incessant suggestion of a direct and environmental character and forcible repression into a moral state of submission and of disbelief in their own power have to be *educated* into a realisation and actual exercise of it.

Lenin, who has filled up many a lacunæ in the Marxist theory of Revolution, contended that it was quite possible to transform a feudal-agricultural social economy outright into a Socialist economy if the cultural standards of the backward peoples were raised by intensive efforts to the level of the advanced peoples who had qualified for Socialism. The Tenth Congress of the Bolshevik Party (1921), which also decided on the New Economic

Policy or NEP, resolved, on Stalin's report, to define the task of the Party as follows:

> ". . . to help the toiling masses of the non-Great Russian peoples to catch up with Central Russia, which is ahead of them, and to help them
>
> (*a*) to develop and consolidate their own Soviet State system in forms consistent with the national character of these peoples ;
>
> (*b*) to organise their own courts, administrative bodies, economic organs and government organs functioning in their own language and recruited from among local people acquainted with the customs and psychology of the local population, and
>
> (*c*) to develop a press, schools, theatres, clubs and cultural and educational institutions generally functioning in the native language.

To return to the chronicle of events, however.

As the Emir sped away from his seething capital a provisional government in the shape of a Revolutionary Committee and a Soviet of People's Commissars was set up in Bokhara with a large preponderance of native membership. This government convened a congress of the people's representatives who declared the former Khanate of Bokhara a Soviet Republic, to be called for brevity the BSR. This BSR was of a heterogeneous composition and, therefore, naturally hesitant. It was too timid to decree the nationalisation of all lands which, as we have noted in an earlier chapter, was the first act of the Bolshevik Government in Russia. The immediate economic effects and, after all, the psychological effect of such a step would have brought the village poor—which means by far the larger majority of peasants—at once behind the Revolutionary Government. However, the village landlord-*cum*-usurer remained in power and the ever-indebted peasant remained, as before, in subjection. In the Tadjik localities, the beys, whose forefathers had become overlords by the right of conquest, were generally Uzbeks. There were also sectarian religious differences accentuated by two centuries of political dominance and subjection by one or another nationality. Thus, though the whole population of Turkestan was basically Mahomedan, the practical differences

between one nationality and another in the field of religion were so great that they virtually belonged to different religions. If the Bokharan Soviet Republic had begun with a programme of nationalisation of land, it would have taken an important step towards a settlement of the national question. But it did not do so. Most of the members of the BSR's provisional government decided in favour of consolidation first and socialisation afterwards, ignoring that the best and most effective way to consolidation was through socialisation.

Significantly, the new government did not call itself "Socialist" and although the officials of the last regime, the mullahs and the beys were disfranchised at the elections they had friends in the government who looked after their interests as well as possible. Several leading revolutionaries, whose personal ambitions outbalanced their Socialist sympathies, were in fact working *sub rosa* hand in hand with these elements. The reactionary policy of the BSR in respect of the peasantry was further aggravated by an ill-conceived adoption of the emergency measures of Russia's War Communism, for example, the forcible taking over of surplus grains, suspension of private trading and draft on the peasants for conscription to labour corps and the Red Army. With nationalisation of land these drastic requisitionings would have been more tolerable. The peasant was not convinced that his new sufferings were for his own good. A change of oppressive authority was nothing to enthuse over. In Russia such drastic requisitionings had, indeed, taken place ; but the background was entirely different, and the peasant tolerated the levies upon his labour. Sir John Maynard correctly indicates the reason:

> "In the third All-Russian Congress of Soviets a voice from the villages found significant expression: 'The land belongs to us: the bread to you ; the water to us: the fish to you ; the forest to us: the timber to you.' The peasants, more than willing to part with their surplus products if the necessary commodities were to be had in exchange, were only deterred by fear of the loss of their land in a counter-revolution from showing their resentment towards the Communist rulers. I again emphasise that the ultimate victory of the Communists was due to the fact that their cause represented

the land for the peasants, while the Whites declared that they would give it back to the landlords."[1]

The revolutionary government of the BSR was accorded immediate recognition by the RSFSR. It recognised without reservation the independence of the BSR and its unconditional right to join, not join or, having joined once, sever relations with, the RSFSR. The BSR decided not to join. The two States entered into a treaty of alliance, assuring each other of mutual military aid for defence against external and internal aggression and of co-ordination of their economic and commercial policies and plans. This treaty also provided that Soviet Russia would help the industrialisation and economic improvement of Soviet Bokhara by placing at the disposal of the latter all necessary materials, implements etc., also the required number of engineers, technicians, mining experts, industrial organisation experts, military instructors, schoolmasters, books, printing presses and printers' accessories etc. etc. On top of all this, the RSFSR made a capital grant of money in the form of "an unredeemable subsidy" in order to enable the young republic to start well.

But the BSR was not destined to start well. Its mistakes and sins of omission and commission apart, there were the Basmachi, now raised from the sordid position of brigand tribes to a motley assemblage of brigands and dispossessed bourgeoisie with armed and other resources galore. The peasantry, which very much disliked being forced to make sacrifices without any corresponding compensation, at first sympathised with the Basmachi, whose ranks swelled rapidly. Uzbek, Tadjik, Turcoman and Kazakh formed this widely scattered element of freebooters whom the Emir's propagandists sought to convert into an army of irreconcilables amenable only to the control of a Muslim ruler. Fortunately for the Government, these bands had only local directions, and it was in the south alone that Ibrahim Bek, an intrepid and able leader, was able to organise the Basmachi under a central control. In the inaccessible regions of Tadjikistan

[1] Sir John Maynard, *The Russian Peasant and Other Studies*, p. 104.

Ibrahim founded a sort of brigand autocracy. He marched on Dushambe and forced the Red Army to retire.

At this hour there emerged on the scene the glamorous personality of Enver Pasha, the hero of many a Turkish battle. This brilliant soldier and politician had since the beginning of this century been responsible, along with Jemal Pasha and Talaat Pasha, for the revolutionary movement in Turkey associated with the Young Turk Party. It had succeeded by the expedient of revolt in securing the deposition of the despotic autocrat Sultan Abdul Hamid and in carrying on the government of the Turkish Empire almost without a break from 1909 to 1918—when Turkey ended both as a monarchy and as an empire, later to reappear as a national republic. The Turkish or Ottoman Empire was a multi-national affair, in character semi-feudal and gradually disintegrating under the impact of the capitalist imperialism of the West. The Young Turks had two alternatives before them: either they could give full autonomy and an opportunity to the empire's component peoples of realising their national aspirations ; or they could suppress them by force of arms and impose the rule of the Turks as the superior nation. In choosing the latter alternative the Young Turks almost re-echoed the *herrenvolk* ambitions of the German militarists with whom Turkey was made to throw in her lot in the War of 1914-18. Then, again, there was another factor. The Second Balkan War (1913) almost drove Turkey out of Europe. "Her centre of gravity was transferred to Asia, to Anatolia, and this turned her attention to the Caucasus and Turkestan, inhabited by peoples of Turkish race and speech. Moreover, some of the Young Turks had realised that the ideal of Ottoman unity without respect for the national claims of the various peoples in the Empire was not only illogical but impracticable. The Turkish national ideal pointed rather to a homogeneous State, consolidated by a natural unity of race and speech, having its centre in the historic territories of the Osmanli Turks in Asia Minor, and seeking its natural expansion by the liberation of kindred Turkish tribes, many of whom still lived under the Russian yoke. Thus arose the Pan-Turkish or Pan-

Turanian movement."[1] Ultimately Pan-Turanian aspirations resolved themselves into the dream of a federation of all Muslim nations in Asia, Europe and Africa with Turkey and its Caliph exercising a spiritual and material hegemony. The idea of a theocratic monarchy for Muslims of all nations has never been a reality, for every Muslim kingdom since the early Muslim conquest of non-Arabic countries has had its own despot who founded his kingdom or empire with the help of the sword. But such an imperialistic notion was in accordance with the traditions of Byzantine civilisation. Enver, along with Jemal and Talaat, implicitly believed in this glorious destiny of Islam and the Caliphate.

Enver continued to be one of the Big Three dictating the fortunes of the Turkish Empire throughout the First World War until Turkey's military collapse. The Arab nations did not reciprocrate the Pan-Islamic aspirations, which was a blow to its exponents. They, however, believed that the Turanian peoples in Central Asia and Caucasia would rise to the call to faith. On Turkey's capitulation on October 30, 1918, Enver, Jemal and Talaat fled from the country. Jemal went to Afghanistan to organise the army there ; Talaat betook himself to Berlin, and Enver, after an unsuccessful effort to cross over to Odessa, went to Berlin too. From there, by devious routes including detention in prisons in Kaunas and Riga, he managed to reach Moscow, where he almost took in the Soviet authorities by a fine piece of dissembling. He professed deep hatred for British and German imperialisms and unbounded faith in the Bolshevik ideal. He had hoped to embroil Russia against the new Turkish Republic of Kemal Pasha (later Ataturk) but as he found the Soviet-Turkish treaty an accomplished fact in March, 1921 he decided to take the last plunge. His efforts to stir up a revolt among Muslims in Transcaucasia having failed, he managed to make his way to Turkestan. Whether the Bokharan Government took him at his word or whether there was a deliberate plan among the saboteurs

[1] Hans Kohn, *A History of Nationalism in the East*, Pp. 236-37.

in high places, Enver was appointed to organise and train up a Red Army for the BSR. Within three days, however, he disappeared, to reappear later as the leader of the Basmachi in Eastern Bokhara. He was joined by several members of the Bokharan Government. A "Muslim war of liberation" was on. International Pan-Islamism was quoted against International Communism, while private jealousies and ambitions were sought to be satisfied by fighting for the "nation" and against the Bokharan Soviet Government.

For a moment the situation was confused, fluid and dangerous. All those who did not love the Revolutionary Government seemed to obey the call for Muslim unity and an Islamic Resorgimento. What Enver apparently failed to realise was the real nature of the rally around him. The neo-Basmachi cared much less for a Pan-Islamic federation than for the restoration of their possessions and their return to greater power. No sooner had his leadership been accepted than there sprouted up intrigues under the cover of his leadership. Most restive among the Basmachi chieftains was Ibrahim Bek, who was faithful to the deposed Emir whose restitution, he believed, would put into his hand the highest power of the land. He and Enver began to clash. Also restive was the peasantry, which was being fleeced to pay for the holy war of the landlords in as rude and thorough a manner as the BSR in its worst excesses never even remotely approached. Peasant co-operation with the Red Army increased and as a result Enver's hordes were forced to retreat. On August 4, 1922 near the Afghan border he found himself pressed by a Red Army detachment. He gave battle. Knowing no physical cowardice, he led his men into the jaws of death, and was killed.[1]

[1] There are different versions of how Enver Pasha met his end. According to some, he was assassinated; but the story currently accepted is that he died in battle. He was at any rate locally raised to the status of a martyr posthumously, and local legend ascribes to him an end befitting a hero.

CHAPTER IX

LIVING HAND OF THE PARTY

ENVER'S exit was a big blow to Basmach hopes, but they were not yet forlorn ones. The mantle now fell on Ibrahim Bek who reinforced his call to the faithful by forceful extortions and ruthless robbery of the village people. He infested the eastern part of Bokhara like an evil incubus till 1925. About the middle of 1923 this region, in which non-socialist Sovietization had yet hardly been attempted, was practically without an organised government. "Life in Eastern Bokhara was so precarious that whole regions had become completely depopulated. Peasants abandoned their homes and sought refuge in the mountains. About 43,000 peasant families with stock cattle and implements fled to Afghanistan. As a result of the disturbed conditions, the sown area in Eastern Bokhara was reduced by 72 per cent, the cattle by 60 per cent, the population by 25 per cent. The country was ruined and starving. Everything was in a state of chaos."[1] In the mountainous country comprising the whole of modern Tadjikistan, containing at that time no railroad and practically no good roads, means of communication were few. The Basmachi with a fair sprinkling of the local population had always an advantage over the Red Army in the matter of movements. The peasantry was terrorised by the brigands and at the same time had little confidence in the new government which had not taken the obvious move of nationalisation of land to rouse them to a determined defence of what was theirs.

It was plain that unless the local population rose in their own defence and helped the Bolsheviks in all possible manner, the Red Army alone could not save them from the depredations of the Basmachi. How to inspire them to action was the problem. As has already been stated, the governments of Bokhara and

[1] Joshua Kunitz, *Dawn Over Samarkand*, p. 145.

Khorezm (Khiva) were only Soviet but not Socialist, and Eastern Bokhara did not enjoy even the Soviet form of administration, unsatisfactory as it was from the revolutionary point of view. Where the Soviets had been established they were mostly dominated by beys, kulaks and mullahs. At the Fourth Conference of the Russian Communist Party held on June 10, 1923, two delegates from Turkestan, Khodzhanov and Ikramov, complained that there was no difference between "present-day Turkestan and tsarist Turkestan, that only the signboard has been changed, that Turkestan has remained as it was under the tsar." This was, of course, an exaggeration but it underlined the fact that the first item on the revolutionary agenda had not yet been accomplished. The training of Marxist cadres had been proceeded with but so far these had been absorbed in Khorezm and Western Bokhara where cities, industries and handicrafts existed and where there were easier means of communication with Russia. As a result, there were few members of the Bolshevik Party in the backward areas ; and nearly all of the few that were there were Russians. To try to achieve a revolution with help of foreigners and an extraneous Red Army was to admit the defeat of the Socialist revolution.

Furthermore, the adoption of the New Economic Policy, or NEP, replacing War Communism in the USSR (RSFSR, Ukraine, Byelorussia and Transcaucasia) in 1922 had, by admitting private trading, private enterprise and profit upon a small scale, introduced a complication in the internal situation. NEP was an inevitable expedient. It was also a risky expedient. The Great Russians, numerically stronger than the non-Russian nationalities by the ratio of 75 million to 65 million, composed the former sovereign nation. They were industrially and economically the more advanced people and NEP gave them an opportunity to resume the exploitation of the less advanced ones. Stalin was fully sensitive to this growing danger and on April 23, 1923 pointed out to the 12th Congress of the Bolshevik Party that "as a result of the NEP, a new force is being engendered in the internal life of our country, namely, Great-Russian chauvinism, which breeds

in our institutions, which penetrates not only into Soviet institutions, but also into Party institutions, and which stalks in every corner of our federation. And the result will be that if we do not resolutely repulse this new force, if we do not strike at its roots—and the NEP favours its growth—we shall be faced with the risk of a rupture between the proletariat of the former sovereign nation and the peasantry of the former oppressed nations —which will mean the undermining of the dictatorship of the proletariat." But it did not foster Russian chauvinism alone, but also "local varieties of chauvinism, especially in republics composed of various nationalities" like Georgia, Azerbijan, Bokhara and Turkestan, "in all of which there are several nationalities, the foremost elements of which may soon begin to compete among themselves for supremacy." Specifying Bokhara, Stalin said there were three nationalities—the Uzbeks, who constituted the principal nationality, the Turcomans and the Kirghiz. In Khiva, too, there was the same thing—Uzbeks and Turcomans, with the former constituting the numerical majority.

Great-Russian chauvinism and local chauvinism, Stalin pointed out, were two of the main factors hindering a union of the formerly oppressed peoples with the Russian proletariat. There was a third great factor—*actual inequality*, a slow-dying legacy of Czarist Russia. The October Revolution had proclaimed equality of legal status for peoples of all the nationalities. It was a great achievement, of course, but while it conferred equality of opportunity, it did not, and could not, confer economic and cultural equality upon all the nationalities. Formally the backward nationalities enjoyed all the rights exercised by the more advanced ones, but there were "a number of republics and peoples, which have not passed, or have hardly entered, the stage of capitalism, which have no proletariat, or hardly any proletariat, of their own, and which on this account are backward economically and culturally, are incapable of utilising to the full the rights and opportunities offered them by national equality ; they are incapable of achieving a higher level of development and thus catching up with the more advanced nationalities, unless

they receive real and prolonged assistance from outside. The causes of this actual inequality lie not only in the history of these peoples, but also in the policy pursued by tsarism and the Russian bourgeoisie, which aimed at converting the border regions into areas exclusively producing raw materials and exploited by the industrially developed central districts."[1] To eliminate this inequality in a year or two was, frankly speaking, impossible. But eliminated it must be, at all costs.

How to eliminate it as speedily as had never before been possible was the big question. Some Bolsheviks favoured an intensive process of mass education by the opening of hundreds of schools and imparting literacy and general knowledge in either the Russian or the native languages as the quickest means of achieving that end. But literacy does not by itself bestow equality, as has been amply shown in India, for instance, where the educated native has uniformly failed to reach equality with the British businessman. It was Stalin again who pointed out the way. "What is wanted," he said, "is real, systematic, sincere and genuine *proletarian assistance* on our part to the toiling masses of the culturally and economically backward nationalities. Apart from schools and language, the Russian proletariat must take every necessary measure to establish centres of industry in the border regions, in the republics which are culturally backward—*and they are backward not through any fault of their own, but because they were formerly looked upon as sources of raw materials.*"[2] The USSR had already taken steps in this direction by transferring a number of factories from Moscow to the East. One was located in Bokhara, and a second in Turkestan, and more factories were to be established. Thus conditions were being forged to enable these republics "to establish with the aid of the Russian proletariat their own centres of industry, small though they may be, in order to create in these centres groups of local proletarians to serve as

[1] Resolution of the 12th Congress of the C.P.S.U. (April, 1923).

[2] J. Stalin, *Report to the 12th Congress of the C. P. S. U.* (April, 1923).

a bridge between the Russian proletarians and peasants and the toilers of these republics."

The Bolsheviks were acutely conscious of the growth of national chauvinism, Great-Russian and non-Russian, among a considerable number of Soviet officials and even within the Party itself, the membership of which was overwhelmingly Russian. This not only endangered the free development of the national republics within the Union but also those outside the Union like Bokhara and Khorezm. Any trace of the "dominant-nation" tendency would, to the extent that it survived, mark the failure of the Soviet experiment in evolving a multi-national system of Socialist freedom. The Bolsheviks viewed with the greatest disapproval the tendency to regard the Union as a step towards the abolition of the national republics and as the beginning of the formation of what is called the "single and indivisible". To eliminate this tendency, they resolved in this conference that "in addition to the existing central organs of the Union, which represent the toiling masses of the entire Union without distinction of nationality, there should be created a special organ representing all the nationalities on an equality basis." For "such a structure of the central organs of the Union would make it fully possible to lend an attentive ear to the needs and requirements of the peoples, to render them timely and necessary aid, to create an atmosphere of complete mutual confidence, and thus to nullify the above-mentioned heritage (chauvinism) in the most painless way." Thus was the Second Chamber of the USSR, the Union Council of Nationalities, conceived.

The necessity was also felt of cleansing the Party of this unwholesome "dominant-nation" tendency within its membership. They found that "the presence, in both the central institutions of the Party and the organisations of the Communist Parties of the national republics, of large numbers of old Party workers of Russian descent, who are unfamiliar with the manners, customs and language of the toiling masses of these republics, and who for this reason are not always attentive to their requirements, has given rise in our party to a deviation which consists in underrating

specific national features and national language in Party work, to an arrogant and negligent attitude towards these specific features —a deviation towards Great-Russian chauvinism." This tendency was characterised as the outcome of a desire for the abolition of these federating national republics and as the beginning of the formation of what Stalin deprecatingly called the "single and indivisible", *i.e.* a Greater Russia with the non-Russian components Russified by forcible regimentation. "This deviation is pernicious," the Party Congress found, "not only because, by impeding the formation of communist cadres of local inhabitants acquainted with the national language, it creates the danger that the Party may become isolated from the proletarian masses of the national republics, but also, and primarily, because it feeds and nourishes the deviation towards nationalism outlined above and hinders the struggle against this deviation."

These survivals of the past had to be eliminated as quickly as possible, and Stalin successfully called upon the Party to carry out the following practical measures:

(1) Forming Marxist study circles of advanced type *among the local Party Workers* in the national republics ;
(2) Developing literature dealing with fundamental Marxist principles written in the native languages ;
(3) Reinforcing the University of the Peoples of the East and its branches in the localities ;
(4) Establishing, under the ægis of the central committees of the national Communist Parties, groups of instructors *recruited from among local workers* ;
(5) Developing mass Party literature in the native languages ;
(6) Intensifying Party educational work in the republics ;
(7) Intensifying work among the youth in the republics.

I have devoted considerable space to the Bolshevik Party's findings and decisions for two reasons: first, to dissipate the myth of the "dead hand of the Party" which a certain class of journalists and writers has assiduously tried to create ; and secondly, to draw the attention of Indian fighters for freedom to the attitude taken by the Bolsheviks in regard to the backward minorities. It will be seen that the Party decided to have its hands made of local flesh and

blood and to discard the hand thrust from outside into the national republics. Not only within the Party was this insistence on the preponderance of the native element pressed but also in the economic life of these nationalities. Industrial enterprises in the Central Asian republics, which were being deliberately fostered, were "obliged to observe the rule that at least half the personnel employed in all grades, including the highest, and on the side of management as well as of production, shall consist of natives."[1] The ownership of the enterprises, of course, was national and not Russian. "Without the native members of the party," says the same writer, "the revolution could not have extended to the colonial territories nor could socialism have consolidated itself there."[2]

CHAPTER X

UNFOLDING TACTICS OF THE REVOLUTION

IN the foregoing chapter was given an outline of the practical measures taken by the Bolshevik Party to bring the revolution fully to the peoples of the East. The first was the establishment of a Union Congress of Nationalities at the head of the U.S.S.R., where each national republic was to have equal representation. The second was education in practical equality with the more advanced nationalities of the West through a system of rapid industrialisation of the East and the maximisation of skill among local peoples, a process calculated to remove the sense of inferiority implanted so carefully in Czarist times by the Great Russians overlords. The third was the training up of local Marxist cadres to purge the Party of the poisonous tendency towards a "dominant-nation" bias, which would mean the defeat of the Revolution itself. It will be noted that the first measure was designed to ensure that

[1] Leonard Barnes, *Soviet Light on the Colonies*, p. 193.
[2] Ibid.

no national group, great or small, found itself under-valued or suppressed. In other words, it was a prophylactic against Great-Russian chauvinism in the high administrative quarters of the U.S.S.R.

The second measure provided a rapid course in the development of an industrial proletariat in Turkestan, to whose hands the dictatorship of the State machinery must pass if the Revolution was to succeed. In colonial empires like the now-liquidated Russian Empire and the British, French, Dutch and Belgian empires, the colonial subjects have been racially different and industrially less advanced than the dominant nations. The essence of colonial imperialism is that skilled work is considered as the ruling nation's—in the context of the present century, the white man's—monopoly. "The badge of colour sharply marks off the white group from the black, and gives each a consciousness of unity based on rivalry with the other. It also serves to make the passage of individuals from one to the other practically impossible. Seen in this perspective, a skilled job appears as a kind of economic 'hedgehog' to be made impregnable with minefields and barbed-wire entanglements in the interests of its occupants at the moment. A morbid tension is set up between the white-skilled and the black-unskilled. The former fear the latter as comprising many potentially skilled but actually frustrated workers ; the latter hate the former as causing the frustration and denying the skill its exercise. Consequently the industrial colour bar has to be supplemented by a complicated system of native disabilities in the civil and political spheres, in education, public health, the enjoyment of public utilities, and so on."[1]

The Bolshevik Revolution took an entirely different view of skilled jobs. The Marxist system, as the reader must be aware, is based upon industries as the result of the application of science to manufacture. Just as electricity, hospitals and automobiles are inseparable from modern ideas of life's amenities, so is industrialisation impossible of divorce from Marxism. It is the ownership,

[1] Leonard Barnes, *Soviet Light on the Colonies*, p. 183.

control and direction of the means of production under the most intensive industrialisation for supplying social needs that undergoes a transference from capitalist to toiler in a Socialist state. Under Capitalism, the slave and the slave-driver remain as two distinct entities ; the machine towers over, and overshadows, the man. Under Socialism, it is man that matters most. The machine's utility lies in its capacity to shorten the volume and duration of labour so as to give man, the toiler, the maximum leisure to follow his cultural pursuits. To be master of the machine, man has to be skilled in its ways ; in other words, he has to be a skilled worker. For the U.S.S.R., therefore, "the most valuable thing in the world is, and always has been, a skilled worker. Productive technique is the key to human advance in every field including that which you call spiritual and we know by the more accurate name of cultural. We therefore strain every nerve to maximise and universalise skill. Our whole system is designed to create unbounded opportunity for everybody, so that attainment may be limited by biological factors alone. . . . A social order that is not always pushing forward the frontiers of technical accomplishment, and making all its members masters of the utmost skill they are capable of, seems to us little better than a madhouse. The continuous upgrading of all workers to ever higher levels of skill is the main arterial road leading to a prosperous and cultivated community. That is why we (the Soviet Government) take such pains to ensure that any worker shall be able at any time to enter any grade for which he can competently perform the work."[1]

Besides seeking to fulfil one of the indispensable conditions of a Socialist state, this measure was also in response to an urgent demand of the times. The aim of Socialism is to raise the standard of living of the entire mass of mankind to the highest possible level by the widest application of science in all departments of life, and not alone in industries. What is Socialism worth if it does not end human misery, poverty and ignorance? But this application

[1] Leonard Barnes, *Soviet Light on the Colonies*, Pp. 183-4.

of science, like the provision of electricity, labour-saving devices and the radio for rural homes or tractors, harvesters, fertilisers and artesian irrigation for fields, could be made available through industrial activity alone. There was a large and urgent demand for trained persons, and at this stage the Soviet Union was very short of them. It had to train people in the various departments of scientific activity as intensively as was never before thought possible, and it proceeded to accomplish this task with an earnestness that could not be mustered in any capitalist country.

It has to be emphasised once again that no amount of persuasion or cajoling by any party or coercion by the State can rouse the people to the extent of staking everything and straining every nerve to undergo the difficulties and inconveniences of an entirely new system of all-out training. They will do so only when they are actuated by high ideals of service, sacrifice and regeneration. The men and women of Soviet Asia—the socalled backward nationalities—have proved by their response to the call for the making of Man that the masses will rise to the greatest heights of effort and self-sacrifice in the best interests of their class. Suffering, privations and labour mean little to them so long as they are convinced that they are building the enduring edifice of the future for the coming, if not their own, generation. The Marxist cadre, missionaries of the proletarian Revolution as well as pioneers of Socialist reconstruction, held together and co-ordinated the efforts of the people as the thread holds a string of pearls in place. It has to be conceded that the initiative, the impetus and the leadership came from them, in much the same way as the preaching of missionaries of the Christian Church offer spiritual persuasion to erring souls of benighted heathens in colonial empires. While the latter failed, the Bolsheviks succeeded, for their appeal was to the logical faculty of man and related to such mundane and urgently distressing affairs as hunger, food, land, livelihood, rights and duties, while the Christian appeal is to his spiritual faculty and relates to such pleasant conceptions as heaven, hell, divine retribution and rewards, love and the divine mystery of the Immaculate Conception—all very well to talk about on the sustenance provided

by roast chickens and good wine and the ill-paid labour of God's unbeloved.

To return to the unfolding tactics of the Revolution, however. We have already seen how the Communist Party arranged for the rapid growth of a proletariat in Central Asia by fostering the establishment of industrial factories. But Lenin, Stalin and other leaders of the Revolution knew that for years and years to come this proletariat would remain a fraction of the teeming agricultural population and that the Revolution must lift the peasant out of his centuries-old poverty, ignorance and degradation into a new world of freedom, culture and power. A practical method for achieving this transformation had to be evolved. Land for the tillers of the soil and collective agriculture were, of course, the obvious aim. But experience with the peasants of the U.S.S.R. in the early days of the Revolution had shown the necessity of hastening slowly. The New Economic Policy had given an impetus to private enterprise and an extension of lease to the middle peasantry and the kulaks. Moreover, collective agriculture, to be successful, depends upon modern power-driven agricultural machinery and until the machinery was forthcoming, attempts at collectivisation were not likely to produce results striking enough to induce undiscriminating peasants to favour this novel procedure. "The collective farm was a new thing, and humanity, most of all rural humanity, prefers the old until it becomes intolerable. 'First we'll summer it, then we'll winter it, and then we'll see,' is the natural sentiment of the man who has followed the slow processes of nature and witnessed her catastrophes."[1] There was the danger that stress given to collectivisation at that stage, with the Basmachi still strong and receiving some support from the rural beys and mullahs, might be the signal for widespread disturbances and might bring the Revolution to the brink of a defeat. The peasantry could be expected to side with their liberators, but the gain thus made would most probably be offset by a new parcelling of the land, which would naturally follow in the absence of tools for collective farming

[1] Sir John Maynard, *The Russian Peasant Etc.*, p. 284.

and of education of the masses in the principles of socialisation of the land. Rapid industrialisation in the Western republics of the Union (to which as yet Turkestan did not belong formally) was, however, bringing the Central Asian peasantry good returns for their labour. As we know, Central Asia produced little foodgrains and a large crop of cotton. Russia was using up more and more cotton in industry and the more cotton Central Asia supplied the more available were imports of foodstuffs and other necessaries of life. It was no approximation to the Socialist ideal that the small intermediary and the middle farmer were for the time being allowed to function. But from the viewpoint of the small peasant of Turkestan it was an immense improvement in his lot that the value of his labours was not being misappropriated by the landlord, the middleman, the exporter and a host of agents of Russian capitalists until his own share dwindled into an insignificant and inadequate portion.

The abolition of middlemen and speculators was hastened by the establishment and insistent encouragement of peasants' unions and co-operatives of producers and consumers in village soviets. Whether in the collection of agricultural products or in the distribution of consumers' imports, the functions of the village co-ops corresponded fairly closely to that of the middlemen in capitalist economy ; in the former case, it was an intermediary between the large-scale buyer and a long string of scattered and small sellers ; and in the latter, it was an intermediary between the big industrial producer or an organised State selling agency and a large number of small buyers. In either case, the profit motive is strictly controlled by the State with a definite tendency towards minimisation of profits in the Marxian sense of surplus value.

The role of co-operative production, which gradually evolves as the benefits of co-operative marketing (or collection) of products and purchase of commodities are realised, is somewhat different. co-operative agriculture can take two different forms: either it can aim at regional self-sufficiency in essentials of food and other crops and associated industries like weaving, pottery, woodwork, hut-building etc. (as obtained in India before the disruptive intro-

duction of British capitalist influence and as seems now to be the plan of Mahatma Gandhi to revive in a somewhat modified form), or it can aim at getting the best results out of the joint labours of the peasants of a particular locality in the production of such agricultural commodities as grow best in that region. In the U.S.S.R. the organisation of industries is on the basis of economic regions not always identical with the political regions ; the latter are demarcated on lines of national inhabitancy while the economic regions have been defined on the basis of economic completeness. A *co-operative farm,* then, is a joint-stock concern of peasant small-holders limited to the raising of a particular crop for a particular season or a particular short period ; and in this, as in some other important particulars, it differs from the *collective farms* that had already made their appearance in the West and that were to make their appearance in the East very soon.

The distinguishing characteristics of a *collective* or *kolkhoz,* it should be remembered, are its permanency and its conformity to the State Economic Plan in the matter of extent and nature of agricultural production. In a *co-operative* the participating peasants have some freedom in choosing the acreage and variety of their crops, and also in deciding to remain in or outside the co-operative plan. In actual practice, however, this freedom is more illusory than real. In a Socialist society individualism can be tolerated to the extent that it does not brush against the economic requirements of society or the plan or measures designed to meet those requirements ; but individualism that respects the Penal Code and offends the social purpose is the only kind revered in capitalist societies. The collective farm is a deliberate, considered and voluntary renunciation of a very large percentage of the individualist freedom of the peasants taking part in it. The land possessed by the collective, like all other land in the U.S.S.R., is the general property of the State and the nation ; it is given to the collective to use for an indefinite period, i.e., perpetually. The land cannot be sold nor can it be let out to tenants by the collective. The big machinery which a collective uses is not its property but that of the Machine-and-Tractor Stations set up in every

economic region and which serve a particular number of collective farms within the region. Light machinery can, however, be owned by the collectives or the peasants. Each peasant has his house for personal use, together with an acre or so of land and a small number of cattle and poultry. These, and his share of the produce of the collective he can use as he likes. Each man becomes a labourer and is paid according to his labour and output.

It is clear from the above outline of a collective farm that it abolishes the kulak altogether ; that it is the logical sequel to the co-operative and that it needs the complete confidence of the peasantry in the stability and permanency of the Socialist state to make them give up their newly won individualist freedom. At this stage in the development of Soviet Central Asia it was clearly out of the question to have collectives in any large numbers. But the peculiar agricultural situation of Central Asia helped in an unusually quick realisation of economic interdependence between the East and the West. Central Asia's monopoly was cotton and its big purchaser was the State, which exchanged it for foodgrains and other consumer's goods with the Bolshevik state of the West. The incidence of the State as buyer and seller ensured steady and high prices and maximum supply of foodgrains and other necessities. Thus the peasants' confidence in the State gradually grew into a solid and decisive factor.

Then there was the question of water. In Soviet Asia, as we have observed in Chapter II, water is a dear commodity, particularly so in the semi-desert region of Central Asia. Vast tracts of land had turned to waste from want of adequate water. The elaborate and intricate systems of irrigation built by generations of natives were repeatedly destroyed by successive waves of invaders, each driving the natives from the best irrigated lands and settling themselves there, only to be deprived of their toils by a later wave of invaders. The Uzbek invasions of the 17th and 18th centuries had so effectively dispossessed the industrious Tadjiks that the canals, dams and reservoirs they had built had largely perished ; and what had escaped serious damage was not attended to

by the inexperienced Uzbeks. Meantime the pressure of population had increased and under Russian imperial authority a new privileged class had consolidated itself. The best of water, as of land, they appropriated to themselves and distributed the remainder to the peasants in a way that best served their own interests. In the majority of cases, water was distributed on the basis of tribal and clan arrangements. Thus a tribe with a small membership enjoyed more water than one with a large membership, irrespective of whether the former needed its quota or whether the latter could do with its inadequate share. Within tribes the division of water was by clans, and here, too, the same arbitrary rule was followed. Within the clans, again, those with a relatively large number of unmarried men got a relatively small quantity of water : among some clans the unmarried had no right to water. And since one had to marry a wife to get the full quota of water, and since one had no means of getting a wife except by purchasing one, it would follow that the poor had the worst time of it.

The problem of water thus assumed two forms—(i) water for irrigation and agricultural purposes, and (ii) water for personal and sanitary use. The standard for the latter use of water varies from land to land with the difference of climate and also with the level of standard of living and local traditions. In Turkestan the aridity of the climate and a long tradition of dearth of water has accustomed the people, like those of Arabia, to do with the least quantity of water. Water for irrigation, however, is much more important, and the Soviet authorities realised that the way to the masses' prosperity lay in a manifold extension of cultivable land on which to settle the landless poor on a collective agricultural basis. But unless new sources of water could be found and used, the parched and dusty land could not be made to grow anything green. There was evidence of the existence of rich underground strata of water ; but this had to be tapped and brought to the surface with help of machinery, and the machinery was just not there. Moreover, the authorities felt that the initiative should in the main come from the peasantry themselves, and that they would not be

STALINGRAD
Volga R.
Uralsk
Ural R.
Orenburg
Magnitogorsk
Astrakhan
Chapayev
Orsk
Aktyubinsk
Emba
Emba R.
Caspian Sea
KAZAK
Aral Sea
Karsak
Krasnovodsk
Syrdaria
Amudarya
UZBEKISTAN
Bokhara
Neftedag
TURKMEN
Bandar Shah
Ashkabad
Charjui
Tashke
Meshed
Merv
Samarkhand
PERSIA
Kushk
Termez
TADJ
Herat
Balkh
AFGHANISTAN
Kabul

SOVIET

E R I A
Sverdlovsk
Trans-Siberian Railway
Petropavlovsk
Omsk
Tomsk
Kustanaisk
Novosibirsk
KUZBAS
Stalinsk
Barnaul
Akmolinsk
HSTAN
Karaganda
Uspensk
Semipalatinsk
Turkestan-Siberian Railway
Sergiopol
R. Chu
L. Balkash
Alma Ata
Urumchi
Frunze
L. Isykkul
KIRGHIZIA
Osh
STAN
Kashgar
SINKIANG
horog
Yarkand
Hunza
N D I A
Gilgit
Anil Mukerji

TRAL ASIA

working towards the fulfilment of the great purpose until the peasantry had evinced a keenness for organising themselves into collectives and had called upon the State to assist them. The nationalisation of water was therefore, of a piece with the nationalisation of land, and Bolshevik propaganda and education were intensively directed towards creating a demand for the expropriation of the kulak as the obstructive factor in the cause of uplift.

Lastly, there was the problem of religion. Marxism does not postulate a God or a Divine Purpose directly or indirectly working through the development of society, nor does it seek to replace the old religions by a new one of its own. God and religion have been used to frighten or soothe, according to circumstances, the underdog into accepting domination by the privileged classes at every stage. The Prophet of Islam was, in the light of his times, a fierce democrat ; but not so his later followers. Like the Christians and perhaps the early Hindus in India, they forced the Gospel of God down the throats of the peoples they vanquished and dominated as absolute autocrats. One God, one Prophet, one code did not prevent the rise of rival Muslim empires, of innumerable and mutually conflicting sects, of slavery and of the complete enslavement of women. On the other hand, God and his supposed Gospel were extensively used to perpetuate the most glaring social injustice. Communism, the mullahs and imams unceasingly stressed upon the ignorant masses, was a sacrilege on the Holy Quran, a total defiance of God and a direct insult to Islam. We have already noted how the Basmachi movement took a semi-religious colour and how Enver Pasha had, with brief success, exploited the slogan of Islam to serve his ends.

The Bolsheviks were set a stiff problem. Religion as a social force of oppression was undoubtedly a strong reactionary factor with an endless capacity for mischief to the cause. The priesthood was economically a functionless class, battening on the labours of the superstitious. Socialism is pledged to the liquidation of such religion as fosters an unscientific outlook on life. At the same time, the Bolsheviks and the Soviet authorities realised that until the masses had education and a culture based upon science, and had a

transformed economic order of society, the discountenancing of religion would have a violently retarding effect upon the masses. When Socialism in respect of life's real necessities and the means of social production had been achieved religion would become a useless appendage and, like a tadpole's tail, would disappear in time without causing anyone any disadvantage. It was not for the State to enforce a complete blackout on religion and the professional religious class, for Socialism does not contemplate the use of the State as an oppressive force. Such use of the State machinery betokens the existence of a ruling class controlling it. As the classes are gradually abolished and all mankind tends to be an economically useful brotherhood, there is also a gradual liquidation of the State as an instrument of class rulership, and organised religion as an offshoot of class domination naturally dies of attrition. Until the building of Socialism had begun it was, therefore, considered premature to disturb the "state-within-state" hierarchy of priesthood, which still exercised a potent influence on the culturally backward peasantry. It was also judged bad policy to stress the materialistic and non-religious basis of Marxist socialism at this stage, for the lives of the dwellers of Turkestan was intimately intertwined with social customs and practices based on the Mahomedan religion. In the circumstances, the Soviets of Central Asia decided not to hitch up a conflict with the body of religious administrators. On the other hand, they adopted an attitude of respect for them.

It is patent, however, that this attitude was taken out of expediency. The Mahomedan religion, as interpreted by the qazi and the mullah, sanctions and encourages polygamy, the veiling of women, the purchase of women for marriage and the denial to women, not only of any kind of freedom, but also of a soul. Socialism, which stands for practical equality among all human beings, for the maximisation of opportunity and skill, cannot strike up a truce with these practices and with the supporters of them for any length of time. There was thus ample ground for conflict with religious authority in the near future and it was a practical certainty that this would begin as soon as a programme

of abolition of these evil customs and practices would be taken up. These primary reforms, however, could not be delayed, and no revolutionary party can hold up such reforms on the ground of minimising conflict and resistance, particularly when a large section of the masses desire them and are prepared to bear the consequences of their choice. A common mistake with a number of foreign critics and commentators of the Revolution is that they seek to make the Bolshevik Party responsible for everything good or bad arising in the process of the Revolution ; they ignore the vital, all-important part taken in the events by the common people, whom they keep in the background as an inert mass or at best as Mary's little lambs. The fact is that the Socialist message of emancipation, equality and brotherhood strongly appealed to the Mahomedans of Central Asia because it fulfilled an essential and urgent demand of the suffering humanity of that region and because the material conditions of life needed the implementation of that message. If there was opposition from some groups and sects, there was active support from more groups and sects. In this and no other way could a small handful of Marxists direct the destiny of one-sixth of the world. The heroes of a mass revolution are the masses, and it cannot be too strongly emphasised that the vital process of a revolution is not the removal of the old oppressive authority but the building-up of the new social order and that the latter task is wholly dependent for success upon the willing help and leadership of the common people—the proletariat and the poor peasantry. It is the masses who harvest a revolution.

Thus were the preparations for the harvesting of the first fruits of success made with infinite care. Response was not slow coming, and when it started to come it grew from a trickle to an avalanche.

CHAPTER XI

TURKESTAN GOES SOCIALIST

The new tactics of the Bolshevik Party, to which the Soviet Governments of Bokhara, Khorezm and Turkestan accorded good support, yielded early results in the shape of increased prosperity for the masses. The time was fast approaching when the next step in the Socialist programme could be undertaken. The rapid increase in the number of state-owned commercial enterprises led to better income for the producer and the gradual minimisation of the importance of the kulak and the small trader who acted as middlemen. The Basmachi were quickly brought under control, though still far from being eliminated. In the Governments there were several changes, the secret supporters of the Basmachi and Uzbek national chauvinism having been replaced by officials either with Marxist training or with genuine Bolshevik sympathies. Almost every key position in the administrative machinery was controlled —actually, if not nominally—by the Bolshevik Party. Under the treaties of alliance between the Central Asian republics and the U.S.S.R. the latter had pledged itself to provide them with technical experts, teachers, army organisers and other necessary personnel for the construction of the revolutionary social economy. In one year from 1923 this was so much speeded up, and a Marxist cadre so quickly trained, that the central political organisations of these republics were distinctly influenced by Bolshevik ideology.

It would, however, be too much to claim that the majority of the peasant masses had either grasped, or sympathised with, the Bolshevik plan of the introduction of Socialism. They had just come into possession of the land, for ages the dream of the expropriated land-labourer's highest achievement, and had just tasted the sweets of prosperity through agriculture. To them the idea of socialisation of land and water naturally at first sounded like another act of expropriation. Besides, the proposition of

socialist nationalisation was the subject of a vastly exaggerated propaganda which found credence with the ignorant and the educated alike. The responsibility of the educated, which so far meant exclusively the mullah, in spreading lies was much the greater and can only be compared with the lying anti-Bolshevik campaign in the capitalist press of late years. Nationalisation of property meant, they propagated, the common ownership of homes, furniture, beasts of burden, meat cattle and, inevitably, the other domestic cattle, namely, women. In the carefully trained opinion of the Muslim peasant, woman was a chattel and withal a pervert chattel, always likely to stray, and get irrevocably defiled. Thus the peasant was still prejudiced against socialism, though the social conditions of his living demanded socialisation.

Increased prosperity also brought out vividly the national differences among the various peoples residing in these republics. In those of Bokhara and Khiva there were Uzbeks, Tadjiks, Turcomans and the Kirghiz, all with distinct national traits, traditions, languages and culture. The Uzbeks had been the ruling nation before the Revolution and, as they had formed the main bulk of the ruling as well as the middle class, preponderated in the ranks of the Djadidi and the Young Bokharans. They also preponderated in the Central Soviets of the republics. As the dominant nation, they considered themselves a cut above the other nationalities, and sought to impose on the latter their language, customs and culture in the name of civilisation. It was to these, among others, that Stalin referred as supporters of "the one and the indivisible." The other nationalities held very different opinions and insisted on their right of self-determination. Thus national differences were mounting quickly and the aggrieved nationalities were equally quickly depending upon socialist self-determination as the remedy for their grievances. The national factor was one of the urgent positive conditions calling for the next step in the revolutionary process.

A peculiarity in this multi-national tangle was the fact that these different nationalities were settled in more or less distinct and compact areas. This made the problem of self-determination

easier of a solution than would have been possible if the nationalities had been promiscuously distributed. It is necessary at this stage to revert to the Bolshevik definition of a nation which has already been referred to in Chapter V. "A nation", Stalin defined, "is (i) a historically evolved, (ii) stable community of (iii) language, (iv) territory, (v) economic life and (vi) psychological make-up manifested in (vii) a community of culture." The geographical distribution of inhabitancy, as well as a common history, a common language and a common way of life including food habits and methods of social intercourse are, therefore, the distinguishing marks of nationhood. "National character" is not a thing fixed once and for all, but is modified by changes in the conditions of life. It is material conditions that give rise to nations at a particular period, and it is they, again, that lead to a coalescence of nations at another. Stalin emphasised that none of the above-mentioned characteristics was by itself sufficient to define a nation; but on the other hand, it was sufficient for a single one of these characteristics to be absent and the nation ceased to be a nation. A nation is a historical category belonging to the epoch of "rising capitalism"; the condition of "rising capitalism" is the evolution of industrialisation out of a feudal-agricultural economy. Under the normal conditions of capitalist economy, it would have taken the Central Asian nationalities long to reach maturity, which would have to be achieved only through a devious and sanguinary national struggle. The impulse of liberation released by the Bolshevik Revolution had, however, carried the work forward with great rapidity and brought about a national and social awakening among the oppressed nationalities in a remarkably short period. It has also to be remembered that the basis of national chauvinism, that is, the tendency of one nation to dominate another, is another and a more general form of class domination. The former Uzbek ruling class wanted to continue to rule because it was economically profitable. It was, therefore, all the more necessary in the interests of security that the national question should be solved in a fair and equitable manner and the national-chauvinist tendencies liquidated for ever. Moreover,

economically the national question was inseparable, as in Russia, with the agrarian question[1]; Socialism could not be firmly founded unless the miasma of a superior-nation middle class had been blown away. Under the guidance and inspiration of the Bolsheviks "national" congresses of the Kirghiz and Turcomans were held in 1923 and the demand of the nationalities for self-determination was formulated, fortified and affirmed. Having been the victims of Uzbek exploitation and oppression for nearly two centuries, they readily welcomed Socialism as the remedy which, indeed, it has proved to be.

How did the Uzbek upper classes take it? At first they took the Bolshevik Party's intentions in regard to the national question very badly. The nobility, the first to be expropriated along with the princely order, had either fled the country or joined the Basmachi, whose new accession in strength was attended with a political orientation, as was evident from the emergence of Enver Pasha as a Basmach leader and from his battle-cry of Pan-Islam. The capitalists had tarried longer in the hope of establishing a bourgeois republic with pro-British affiliations and an almost unrestricted share in the exploitation of the native population. The Khokand caucus was a capitalists' attempt to secure a foothold by appealing to the nationalistic instincts of the middle class. The middle class in any feudal-agricultural region under the conditions of rising capitalism is, however, an unstable class. The aim of the petty bourgeoisie is to attain the bourgeois status; it strives frantically to reach the upper level by toadying and emulating the habits, practices and appearances of the upper class. A small percentage succeeds and enters the portals of the *noveaux riches*, but the larger percentage fails and is drawn inevitably (in their estimation) down into the working-class. For some time, however, the old associations of birth, social ties and past affluence keep the latter sullen, discontented and suffering from a

[1] The agrarian question is the predominant labour question in a mainly agricultural country. Also Cf. Lenin, *On The Right of Nations to Self-Determination*: "Marx had no doubt as to the subordination of the national question as compared with the 'labour question'."

sense of guilt. It is only in the next generation, removed from the mooring-chains of old bourgeois traditions and pretensions, that the stain of so-called superiority is finally removed, and the erstwhile descendants of the petty bourgeoisie lose themselves in the drab dust of the Great Unwashed—the proletariat. Even under conditions of rising capitalism in any particular country there are revolutionary possibilities and the middle class, on account of its instability and ability to conform itself to the requirements of both the upper and the lower classes, becomes the origin and core of the party of the revolution as well as a very stubborn opponent of progress. Those who plump for revolution have to declass themselves consciously. Such persons are relatively very rare in any country. But fortunately for man, they do exist.

The middle class in Turkestan, mainly confined to the Uzbek nationality in the urban areas, was no exception to this general law. While one part of it cultivated revolutionary sympathies, the other had definite pro-capitalist predilections and fought each other with the fanatic earnestness of crusaders. While the former was numerically smaller and undoubtedly weaker and the latter was not only larger and more well-equipped at the first stage, the former had the support of the small but growing proletariat, the Red Army, the Bolshevik Party and the U. S. S. R. The latter, after the fall of the Khokand "national" government, saw the futility of opposing the march of Sovietization, and a portion of it went over to the side of the Soviets with carefully concealed intentions. The middle class is an opportunist class. It had hopes, in common with the capitalist democracies, that a perversion of human nature like Bolshevism would early come to grief and the Bolshevik attempt to level up superior and inferior classes would prove a ghastly failure. In that event, the future would belong to the middle class. For the time being the thing was to keep alive, get into the governmental machinery, give it a twist to make it unworkable and seize it at the proper moment. For a moment this section succeeded in penetrating into the highest councils of the Bolshevik Party. To take only one instance, Sultan-Galiyev was a Tartar party worker and a member of the

Collegium of the People's Commissariat for the Affairs of the Nationalities. He took advantage of his responsible post in order to create an illegal organisation with the purpose of opposing the measures adopted by the Party in connection with the national question. He established contact with open counter-revolutionary forces, in particular the Basmachi. However, the middle class, in conformity to its own centrifugal tendency, was so sharply divided within itself and so full of conflicting interests and ever-growing factions that Sultan-Galiyev was detected in his secret activities very early. But he was allowed to carry on for a certain time because, as Stalin said in his own defence when charged by the Central Committee of the Party in June, 1923, "there are so few intellectuals, so few thinking people, even so few literate people generally in the Eastern republics and regions that one can count them on one's figures" and one could not help setting store by them. "It would be criminal not to take every measure to save from competition people of the East whom we need and to preserve them for the Party." There were many Sultan-Galiyevs in the administration and within the Party whom the Bolshevik leaders had to tolerate because of the paucity of well-trained native Marxist cadres. And these opportunists were biding their time, plotting for the overthrow of the Soviet regime and hoping for a quick denouement.

Unfortunately for them the Soviet Government, far from becoming weaker, became stronger and stronger and had increasing support from the peasantry, the workers and a growing section of the middle class. The hopes of the "Rights", or the nationalists, wilted. Those of the "Lefts", *i.e.*, the proponents of an over-simplified and quick-fire "communism" also wilted. The idea of an administrative demarcation of the Central Asian region along national lines of territory did not frighten the peasants ; on the other hand, it had their support, for it promised to end oppression by a ruling nation. Moreover, their newly found prosperity after a nightmare period of famine and lawlessness was associated with the suppression of a whole hierarchy of middlemen and exploiters, many of whom were supported by an Uzbek ruling authority. It

was not surprising, therefore, that the Soviet Governments of Bokhara, Khiva and Turkestan should elect to declare themselves Socialist republics by September, 1924 and decide upon the creation of the national Uzbek Republic with an Autonomous Region of the Tadjiks, and the Turcoman Republic. This involved a thorough redistribution of territories, for the Uzbek national area ran through Khorezm, Bokhara and Turkestan. The remainder of the old Khanate of Khiva became Turkmenistan and that of the Soviet republic of Turkestan became Kazakhstan. It was only logical that these Socialist republics should join the U. S. S. R. both on ideological grounds as well as those of material safety.

From now onwards, the Central Asian republics became parts of the whole Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, a limb of a growing organism striving for the building-up of a complete Socialist society. What had so far been achieved was the *political* defeat of Capitalism, effected by the expropriation of the capitalist and the landlord, the conversion of the land (with some qualifications), factories, workshops, mills, railways and the banks into public property, the adoption of NEP, the building-up of State-owned industry and the application of Lenin's co-operative plan. But the main task as yet lay ahead, and it was to secure the *economic* defeat of Capitalism by the establishment of a Socialist economy over one-sixth of the world. This was the task of the proletariat in 1925. The first step to this end was the industrialisation of the country. Stalin, who upon the death of Lenin had become the leader of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and virtually its dictator, was exercised by two considerations —domestic and international. From the domestic or internal angle, he was sure that the workers and peasants of the U.S.S.R. would be fully able to liquidate the remnants of the bourgeois order and establish Socialism. From the international angle, he visualized the Union as the potential object of intervention and encirclement by the capitalist Powers. He reckoned that the victory of Socialism in the U.S.S.R. would result in victorious proletarian revolutions in several countries and thus break the threat of encirclement which he felt the U.S.S.R. could not by itself meet. Stalin was both

right and wrong. He correctly estimated the international situation and made the Soviet Union into the greatest land Power ; he was somewhat off the mark when he banked upon proletarian revolutions in other countries. Organised Capitalism in the West as well as the East forged a powerful chain for the proletariat by building up Fascism, a cult of racial dictatorship over subjugated nations which has been the Frankenstein of Imperialism, the highest phase of Capitalism according to Lenin. Fascism means and has meant war, and we are having a prolonged blood-bath from which we may emerge clean, fresh and socialist. Whether we *shall* do so is a question to which the present writer is unable to anticipate the answer.

CHAPTER XII

BUILDING SOCIALIST SOCIETY

With the incorporation of the Turkic republics of Central Asia the Soviet Union attained the geographical area which was to remain constant up to September, 1939. It now embarked upon the ambitious and arduous task of building up a Socialist society on the ruins of a feudal-imperialist order under conditions of rising capitalism. The basis of such a social order was to be economic, its keystone being social control of the means of production and the raw materials ; and the aim of Socialism is expressed in that fine slogan: *From each according to his capacity, to each according to his requirements.* From the touch-line to the goal, however, the distance was long and the complications endless. In human affairs, one does not begin as on a clean slate but has to reckon with individuals bred and trained in certain set habits of life and thought which it is possible to maintain only under a definite social organisation. To go over completely from individualist economy to Socialist economy is not an overnight exercise like

changing one's residence but is a long and not necessarily comfortable process, in the course of which there is bound to be a good deal of privation, suffering and disappointment till the end is achieved. It is clear that in embarking upon such an enterprise each step should be premeditated and carefully calculated to form a definite progressive step towards the desired aim. In other words, a society turning Socialist should have an all-embracing social economic plan with a clear-cut, unequivocally Socialist purpose.

The Soviet Government was fully aware of the paramount necessity of such planning. Soon after the War of Intervention ended, it created in 1921 the State Planning Commission (Gosplan) which, as a permanent body, functions as the mainspring of the whole social economy of the U.S.S.R. since 1928, when the First Five-year Plan was put in operation. Gosplan is a permanent commission of 11 members elected from among the prominent industrial workers, scientists and specialists. Its first task was to work out a plan for the fundamental reconstruction of the economic system. The strain of intervention and War Communism (the latter inevitable for fighting off the interventionist Powers) had left the U.S.S.R. agriculturally and industrially disorganised ; we have already noted the terrible effect they had on Soviet Central Asia's agricultural masses. In 1921 NEP was introduced ; the reintroduction of private trade, de-nationalisation of a number of industrial concerns, encouragement of private initiative as well as producers' and consumers' co-ops and reappearance of taxes and rates quickly resulted in increased output in industry, agriculture and trade and made possible the restoration of the national economy to the pre-war level. NEP was, however, as Lenin admitted, a retreat from the Socialist ideal though under the prevailing conditions of Russian economy Lenin claimed that it would be a step forward in the Soviet Republic. He conceived of NEP as a half-way house between small production and Socialism which, as has already been explained, means the social control of production as perfected by scientific and technological skill and mechanical and other inventions. Like all half-way houses NEP

was full of holes. There was little co-operation and co-ordination between the different branches of the national economy. Leasing of productive industries to private parties had at first led to increased production but later used up, as a result of excessive wear and lack of replacements and proper supervision, the old equipment. Moreover, NEP had revived to some extent the dangerous trends of Great-Russian and non-Russian chauvinism. Still, on the whole, it had succeeded in arresting economic disorganisation and raising agricultural and industrial output to the pre-war level.

By the end of 1925 it was clear that NEP had exhausted its utility and that a Socialist plan had become urgently necessary. But planning presupposes experts and a stabilised society. The the Soviet Union lacked the first, and the second had not yet been evolved. The period between 1925 and 1928—the year of introduction of the *Pialilcka* (Five-Year Plan) was one of vacillations and mistakes ; but just as revolution does not change human nature overnight, it does not take away man's right to get to the truth through mistakes. It is rather the increased liberty to take bold decisions and run the risk of making big errors that distinguishes a revolutionary process from an evolutionary one. The Soviet plan of industrialisation certainly suffered from lack of previous experience. In no other country has this been tackled in a planned or scientific manner ever before. The capitalist order is itself the result of one and a half centuries' blind groping, bungling and infliction of avoidable misery on millions of workers and peasants and its organisation is one long story of growing oppression and international wars. The Bolsheviks had to build up industries on the scale of the capitalist nations in a very short period and without invoking the oppression that characterises the capitalists' method of industrialisation. Under the circumstances there were naturally mistakes, miscalculations and a certain amount of waste. To judge by general results and by the actual outcome of the Plans under the test of this war, Soviet planning has not only succeeded, but it has provided the world with sound ideas of economic construction that could be improved upon in the light of experience and local conditions but never disregarded.

The First Five-Year Plan (1928-33) was characterised by an intensive industrialisation of the whole Soviet Union in which the Eastern regions received special consideration. This period marked the culmination of the tendencies that were growing since 1921 through the entire NEP period. It was, as S.P. Turin says, "a period of *Machine Rush,* similar to the 'Gold Rush'."[1] In the sphere of agriculture, it was marked by wholesale collectivisation and the uprooting of the kulak, a development that is usually referred to by English writers under the suggestive generic name "The Terror." The only "terrible" thing about it was to provide against sabotage and conspiracy. That provision was ruthless and, in isolated instances, extreme; but the Soviets had ample taste, in their early experience with the Whites and the Basmachi, of what leniency would have led to.

Mention has already been made of the prime importance of machinery to Socialist agriculture. That was one of the reasons for the Machine Rush, but not quite the whole reason. The other reason was of an international character. As was said in the last chapter, the policy-makers of the Soviet Union were exercised by a real fear of foreign invasion. "The industrialisation of Soviet Russia under the First Five-Year plan created in an astonishingly short period of time the conditions in which the passage from the theory to the practice of mechanised war became a real possibility. The transformation was achieved not too soon in view of the radical change in the German political atmosphere which acute Soviet observers were able to anticipate several years before the change took actual form in 1933. The danger of war rapidly grew. . . The Five-Year plan had begun to give results in terms of armaments by 1933. In that year the People's Commissar for Defence, Marshal Voroshilov, said that the Plan laid excellent foundations on which to build all the technical appliances for modern warfare'."[2] Some of what has been stigmatised as "waste-

[1] S. P. Turin, *The U.S.S.R., An Economic and Social Survey,* p. 158.

[2] Paul Muratoff and W. E. D. Allen, *The Russian Campaigns of 1941-43,* Pp. 17-18.

ful effort" by English critics of the Soviet Union was due to this undisclosed factor. East of the Urals, in the silent spaces of Siberia, giant factories were built, but not for the time being worked. "When I saw those factories," writes George Borodin, "my first thought was: 'I suppose that is another example of Soviet mistakes. And I can get no information because the officials want to give me a one-sided picture of their work, showing only the fine achievements and omitting all the errors.' . . Many Russians themselves in the Soviet felt the same, I am sure, though they did not openly express it. And they have been pleasantly disillusioned—as I have, as the world has."[1]

Defects and drawbacks, of course, were there. The Revolution and the series of internal and external wars till 1921 had almost completely disorganised industrial production, seriously hampered agriculture and dislocated the old distributive machinery. NEP had restored them to almost the pre-war (1914) level. It was a very unsatisfactory level. And the First Five-Year Plan was expected by a critical world to achieve the miracle of taking the Soviet Union from that level to the completest modernity, such as the Western world had had not yet succeeded in achieving. This was far from the intention of the makers of the policy; what they aimed to achieve and claimed to have achieved is expressed in the following:

> "During this period, the U.S.S.R. has become radically transformed and has cast off the integument of backwardness of medievalism. From an agrarian country it has become an industrial country. From a country of small individual agriculture it has become a country of collective, large-scale mechanized agriculture. From an ignorant, illiterate and uncultured country it has become—or rather it is becoming—a literate and cultured country covered by a vast network of higher, intermediate and elementary schools teaching in the languages of the U. S. S. R."[2]

[1] George Borodin, *Soviet and Tsarist Siberia*, Pp. 98-99.
[2] J. Stalin, *Report to the 17th Congress of the C.P.S.U.*

At the time of introducing NEP, Lenin had mentioned the existence in the Soviet republics of five distinct social-economic formations: (1) patriarchal economy, represented by the family unit grouping of the nomadic races and characterised by an absence of trading ; (2) small commodity production, represented by petty peasants and artisans who made up the majority of the population ; (3) private capitalism ; (4) State capitalism ; (5) Socialism. The First Five-Year Plan liquidated elements no. 1, 3 and 4, seriously weakened no. 2 and developed no. 5 as "the sole commanding force" in the whole economy of the Union.

The plan had two cardinal features, namely: (1) industrialisation and (2) collectivisation of agriculture. These were to influence and change the lives of 170 millions of people and reorganise the very bases of their social existence in a very short time. During the NEP period hardly any new industries had been created, but the groundwork for their creation was being steadily prepared ever since 1924 by feverish activity on the part of the State Planning Commission which sent out exploratory parties to prospect for new materials and resources like coal, minerals and oil that were indispensable for industrialisation. Some prospecting and exploitation had already been done in Siberia during the Czarist regime and the astonishing variety and abundance of them in Siberia had already been noted. Siberia, then, became the first arsenal of the Soviet planners. The position of coal and oil as sources of industrial power is obvious ; of the former, Siberia is a rich storehouse, but Central Asia was not known at the time to possess coal deposits in any considerable quantities and is still not known to possess them, though new veins have been discovered and worked in Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Kirghizia. New oilfields have been discovered in the Urals region and in the Central Asian republics but their operation began mostly after the First Five-year plan had been completed. Besides, the position in 1925 was that even known fields could not be worked for want of machinery and skilled men. There was another source of power on which Lenin placed great reliance. This is electric power. Lenin "saw that the way to revolutionise Russia was to

electrify Russia ; and as fast as the electrification could be effected Russian steppes and Asiatic deserts became flourishing civilised cities, and her wild tribesmen cultivated artisans."[1] The cheapest way of getting electric power for the home as well as the factory was to harness natural and artificial cascades (dams); and the exploitation of the mountain streams racing down the Pamirs was a feature of the Plan. But here, too, the same difficulties existed—no machinery and few men. It was plain that the former had to be purchased and the latter hired from abroad, and that both had to be paid for on the tick. The first headache of the Soviets was to find where the necessary money would come from. To count on foreign loans was out of the question, for the capitalist countries refused to grant loans. The funds had to be found within the U. S. S. R. The profits from industries and revenues from the peasantry were diverted to this end, and later came gold from the Siberian mines at which, for centuries before the Revolution, convicts, chained and manacled, had to raise gold ore for the Czar's aggrandisement.

The first stage of industrialisation, already well advanced before the First Five-Year Plan was inaugurated, saw an influx of many engineering experts and machinery—mainly electrical—from foreign countries, particularly Germany and the U.S.A. Till 1933 there was some bungling and inexpert handling of installation of hydro-electrical power-houses and industrial factories, a factual account of which lives in the pages of J. Littlepage's reminiscences.[2] In 1928 the Soviet Gold Trust had very few engineers and managers at its disposal and some mines had to operate without a single experienced and technically trained person. It is interesting to note how this grave deficiency in manpower was made up in the course of five years. The seriousness and meticulous regard with which the Soviet peoples took up the Plan made capitalist-trained Littlepage think at first that it was nothing more than a bureaucratic system of red tape which, by abolishing pri-

[1] Bernard Shaw, *Everybody's Political What's What*, p. 21.
[2] J. Littlepage and D. Bess, *In Search of Soviet Gold*.

vate enterprise (mistaken for abolition of all competitive activity in production), would kill enterprise altogether. The Soviet Government, however, set thousands of peasant youths and students to learn the rudiments of mining processes. The brighter among them were selected as foremen, instructors and managers and sent to the mines where they, in turn, taught the unskilled labourers to receive training in skill. This levelling-up process was typical not only of mining but of all industries, and became so striking that the same pessimistic Littlepage conceded in 1939 that fairly strong foundations had been laid for almost all industries. In this process women were encouraged to take a larger and larger part. It is important to remember that in the Soviet Union no fundamental disability attaches to sex, religion, colour or nationality ; the rates of payment, hours of work, responsibilities and benefits being the same for workers of both sexes and all nationalities in each category of labour. Of 31 million industrial workers in the U.S.S.R. in 1939, 45 per cent were women.

The best illustration of industrialisation in Soviet Asia is offered by the Urals region, where the First Plan achieved the most spectacular success. "In 1928 the Urals had 100 small plants ; ten years later, in 1938, when the Second Five-Year Plan was brought to a close, more than 200 of the largest industrial plants in the world had been erected and were in operation in the Urals."[1] The Urals industrial area consists of two Regions—Sverdlovsk and Chelyabinsk, and includes the two industrial cities of the same names, as also Perm, Troitsk, Nizhni-Tegilsk and Magnitogorsk. Though geographically a small part of this area is in Europe by virtue of being situated west of the Urals, economically the whole belongs to Siberia. The most necessary as well as the rarest minerals are to be found here in profusion. Iron, chrome, nickel, copper, gold, bauxite, silver, coal, oil—all these lie packed up under the soil ready for the explorer and the scientist to yield themselves for the benefit of man. On the moun-

[1] R. A. Davies and A. J. Steiger, *Soviet Asia*, p. 32.

tains are thick forests whose timber is going to the making of newsprint for the U.S.S.R's newspapers. The discovery of fuel deposits, however, is recent, and at the end of the Third Five-Year Plan, industrial coal for this region was being brought by rail from Karaganda in Kazakhstan, a neighbouring region. Except for Sverdlovsk, of which a small core had been in existence during pre-Revolution days, all the cities are new and, in order to prove as it were the worthlessness of capitalist claims that big national industries could not be built overnight, are the result of about a decade's activity. Magnitogorosk happens to be a much bigger iron-producing centre than either Birmingham or Pittsburgh, and thereby hangs a tale.

> "Magnitogorosk stands as a symbol," state Davies and Steiger, "of the bold and enterprising construction of the period and as a monument to Soviet faith in man. It is a weapon, a many-edged weapon, against backwardness, against ignorance, against native and foreign foes. Hitler paid respect to this monument when he was forced to admit that he under-estimated Soviet industrial resources. The fifth columnists in the Soviet Union resisted long and bitterly the building of the Magnitogorsk plant. They claimed, at first, that there was not metal in the Magnetic Mountain. When this was disproved, they insisted that the ore was poor in quality. Then they maintained that the plant would prove too expensive to run ; that under winter conditions, sometimes reaching 40 degrees below zero, metal could not be smelted, that blast furnaces would deteriorate. One by one the arguments were liquidated and one by one so were the fifth columnists."[1]

The story of the growth of Magnitogorsk out of the wilderness is typical of the growth of industrial cities all over the Soviet East. Everywhere there is plenty of evidence of a titanic struggle against overwhelming odds, a cheerful self-sacrifice on the part of

[1] R. A. Davies and A. J. Steiger, *Soviet Asia*, p. 40.

the pioneers, crafty intrigues, sabotage and violent reprisals and clumsy and laborious fulfilment of the Plan by workers who sought to make up for want of experience by an abundance of sincerity and self-sacrifice.

It is not intended in this book to dwell on the magnitude of the industrial output or the profusion and variety of the raw material resources of Soviet Asia. These have been dwelt at length in many of the sources quoted and referred to in course of this narrative. Suffice it to mention on this occasion what Sir Stafford Cripps and several others noted during the second phase (1942) of the Soviet-German war. With the loss of the industrial centres of the Ukraine, which were generally known to be the most important in the Soviet Union, not only was the industrial output of the Union maintained, but it was considerably increased. In this book the main business is to show in broad outline how it became possible to achieve within so short a period so striking a result.

At this stage it will not be out of place to refer to the lot of the industrial worker, the proletariat—the co-ordinate power in the dictatorship of the common man over the State. The worker is the conscious core of the revolutionary masses and he occupies, therefore, an important and especial place in the social economy of any revolutionary government. Moreover, it was a matter of immediate tactics with the Soviet Government to encourage more recruits for factory work by giving the skilled worker decent wages and the maximum possible amenities. It was also aimed to direct in this way the attention of the agricultural masses to the difference of standard of living between a State factory worker and a individualist peasant small-holder and thereby to industrialise his agricultural production by adopting collectivisation. Socialism bases its claim for adoption on two things: first, by conceiving of, and actually treating, science as a social activity, *i.e.*, by adopting the scientific attitude of life for everybody and by making the benefits of science equally available to all it brings about a quick and simultaneous rise in the standard of living of all categories of workers engaged in socially useful labour. Secondly, by bringing

about a reduction in the labour-time of each person by the use of machinery perfected by scientific and technical skill, it provides greater leisure for the workers to pursue their cultural aims to the best of their capacity. Their improved lot was, therefore, at once evidence, illustration and justification of Scientific Socialism. Even before the Plan, the Soviet worker's wages rose from his 1913 wages by 60 per cent ; though his housing conditions could not yet be noticeably improved, they were much better than what they were before the Revolution ; he was entitled to social insurance and other benefits that did not exist in Czarist times. "Probably the greatest material advantage for which the Russian workers were indebted to the revolution was the reduction in working hours. The 8-hour day as the normal working day, the 6-hour for unhealthy and dangerous occupations, were great and permanent gains for the working class . . . . but no other factor contributed so much to this end as the steady progress in nutrition. . . . At the end of the NEP the workers had practically overcome the consequences of malnutrition and over-exertion during the 'seven lean years', 1914-21."[1]

When the Bolsheviks set themselves to work for broadbasing prosperity on the labouring masses in industry and agriculture there was undoubtedly at the start a great disparity between the workers and the peasants in the standard of living, income and social amenities. This was conditioned by several factors which may be briefly noted here. In contrast to the industrial worker, the peasant at this stage relied on his physical labour, unaided by scientific implements to lessen his labour and yield an increased outturn, and worked on the very limited material of his small plot of land. His labour could be likened to that of the small manufacturer *vis-a-vis* mechanised industry. Thus the economic value of his labour in terms of social production was smaller than that of the industrial workers. It is the aim of Socialist society to bring all socially useful labour to a level of maximum productiveness and, by effecting this, to raise its value to a high common

[1] E. Strauss, *Soviet Russia*, Pp. 147-8.

parity, which expresses itself in a common enjoyment of life's amenities, a uniformly rising standard of living and an equality of social status. In order to achieve this it is necessary that agricultural labour should be transformed in character from individualist enterprise into collectivised—*i.e.*, socialised—effort, which alone can give it the full benefit of scientific and mechanical skilled workmanship. Until, therefore, collectivisation could be thorough and agricultural production could be as effectively planned as factory production, this parity between labourers in field, factory and workshop could not take place without damaging the very basis of Scientific Socialism.

So there was at first a great difference in standard of living between the highly organised skilled labour of industrial workers and the disorganised unskilled labour of agricultural workers, a difference that was progressively eliminated with the passage of time until by 1941 the agriculture of the Soviet Union had become collective barring some 0.7 per cent of the total sown area still worked by individual peasants. The progressive tendency of Soviet agricultural labour seems to have been misunderstood by the generality of people outside the Union, before whom the initial disparity has been exhibited by anti-Soviet propagandists so cunningly as to convey the idea that under the Soviet Socialist economy with the so-called Marxian "worship" of the machine the diabolical proletariat (at once the master and the slave of mechanical power) exercises a ruthless dictatorship over the peasantry. There is much sympathy and commiseration for the "oppressed" peasantry of Soviet Union by peasant party leaders of many countries, including India. The quality of sympathy is not strained and undoubtedly reflects the goodness of heart of those leaders. Only the fact remains that all this sympathy is entirely misguided. They cry over things that have not really happened, like old maids crying over dead dream-children that had never been born.

Of more fundamental importance is the argument advanced by those social economists who are exercised by socialist ideologies but expect a ready-made heaven where all problems have been

automatically solved by a millennial Revolution. To quote one of them:

> "Collectivization and mechanization made Russian agriculture less primitive, but for this very reason also less independent. The modern agricultural system of the Soviet Union is still very young and not firmly rooted. It still needs extraordinary investments and normal industrial supplies of oil, tractors and mechanics in order to carry on and grow. If the Soviet power should be unable to maintain supplies of tractors, oil, fertilizers and many foodstuffs in manufactured form, a dangerous agricultural crisis would be the consequence which would have much graver effects on the economic system of the country than world war and revolution had in their time. Soviet agriculture has become very sensitive to developments in other spheres of Soviet life, particularly the state of industry."[1]

That there is the danger of a serious crisis if the materials requisite for the mechanisation of agriculture are either not available or not supplied is indisputable. Small farm units depending on the limited individual labour of their peasant owners are to a far larger measure independent of outside aid, and can carry on in a pottering manner through upheavals in other spheres of social life and through violent changes in history. But this so-called independence inevitably means poverty and domination by economically more powerful classes and a perpetuation of the misery into which toilers on the land and workers on small handicrafts have lived since the emergence of industrial capitalism. A collective farm is really an agricultural factory unit obeying the laws of industrial organisation and capable of yielding all the benefits arising therefrom. That it has not yet been carried to perfection is to be admitted; but the striking results obtained in the Western as well as the Eastern republics of the Union furnish evidence enough of its feasibility and utility and the scientific character of its conception. As a matter of fact, the Soviet Union (which is a multinational federation of a

[1] E. Strauss, *Soviet Russia*, Pp. 311-12.

number of national states) has been acutely conscious of the problem of oil, tractors and mechanics. When it decided to start State farms and co-operative peasant farms it was very, very short of every one of these three requisites. Up to 1932 the Union purchased tractors from abroad; many of these could not give useful service on account of mishandling by ignorant peasants, and lay broken up in the fields. The wastage in terms of money was huge. But it was only for a short time. In five years the Soviet youth had learnt to use tractors and a lot of other machines. "If you can run a tractor, you can run a tank. If you understand an engine, you can easily be taught how to operate an anti-tank gun. Today ten million Russians are facing the most highly mechanised army in history, an army that has at its disposal every possible gadget coming out of a laboratory. If Russia had not driven her people through collectivisation of the land and had not smashed thousands of tractors, at a terrific cost, Russia would not have had these millions of men who understand mechanical things and who can fight!"[1]

CHAPTER XIII

SCIENCE IN THE SERVICE OF MAN

Industrial construction is invariably associated in capitalist countries with the existence, side by side with big mass-producing factories, of jerry-built housing, slums, gutters, squalor and absence of sanitary and medical relief. The miner in Britain and the U.S.A., not to speak of India, and the native labourers in British planters' vast estates in Britain's colonial empire and in India, offer a striking illustration of capitalist exploitation of one nation by another.[2] In Soviet Asia the pernicious factors of profit and racial

[1] Maurice Hindus, quoted in Davies and Steiger's *Soviet Asia*, p. 41.

[2] Cf. Dr. H. C. Mukherjee, *Indians in British Industries*, Leonard Barnes, *Soviet Light on the Colonies* and Alexander Campbell, *Empire In Africa* etc.

domination do not exist, therefore the question of exploitation of labour does not also arise. On the other hand, the planning of industries becomes a part of the all-embracing structure of the State Plan which seeks to accomplish the "making of Man". Thus the industrial centres of Siberia and Central Asia have been laid with great care as to civic planning, the aim being to build garden cities for workers with up-to-date amenities and services. These, however, naturally took a considerable time to work out in practice in view of the primitive character and confusion of Czarist industries and medical education on which the Revolution had to base its vast undertaking. Till 1937 there was a shortage of plumbing materials, waterworks apparatus and doctors qualified in the higher degree of medicine corresponding to graduates in English-speaking countries. As a result, the available supplies had to go to the industrial areas. (During her unauthorised journey into Soviet Asia, Ethel Mannin found that the university town of Samarkand was without a public water-supply. This drew forth some sarcastic comments from her in respect of Soviet planning. She, however, made the usual mistake Britishers, educated into believing that underground sewers and running water mains are unfailing tests of culture and civilisation, make and allowed her sympathy to uselessly run into pity.[1]) Yet sanitation and popular education had to be looked after in the rural areas, and the Soviet Government have carried out a fourfold policy to ensure fair medical service in villages. They created a network of regional polyclinics in the rural areas and placed them in the charge of medical graduates; they also reintroduced the pre-revolution measure of turning out "medical assistants" with a shorter course of training. In a Socialist society, health insurance is of as much fundamental social importance as employment insurance. Health service in the U.S.S.R., therefore, was aimed from the start to include the preventive as well as the curative aspect of medicine and to cover the health needs of the individual citizen from the hour of his or her conception to the hour of death. Thus the responsibility of the Public Health Com-

[1] Ethel Mannin, *South to Samarkand*, Part II, Ch. VIII, Pp. 299-300.

missariat of the U.S.S.R. is as grave as it is extensive, including as it does not only the disposition of medical personnel and their training but also the manufacture of drugs and medical instruments and other requisites.

"Soviet practice has discarded as out of date the notion that the basic unit in the public health system is the individual doctor. The basic unit is the health protection station in factory, mine, office or farm. The doctors and nurses in these stations, working with the factory committee of the trade union concerned (or in the collective farms with the board of management), exercise control over surroundings and the working conditions from the standpoint of sanitation and hygiene. They supervise safety measures and provide against accidents and occupational disease. They arrange for inspection of food served in canteens and restaurants. They take steps to prevent the outbreak of epidemics, and are responsible for the health education of the workers. They medically examine all the workers periodically and treat the slightest cases of illness or accident. When necessary, they recommend workers for the special diet restaurants, or for places in the health resorts, holiday homes and sanatoria"[1] A number of basic medical units centre round a polyclinic or hospital, which provides specialist service in addition to general. The more important of these are equipped with X-ray, massage and electrical apparatus and chambers for specialised treatment and surgery. All medical workers are under State employ and are paid by the State.

This is not to say—and the Soviet authorities do not claim it—that the scope of medical service has been complete. Though the ratio of doctors to the populations of the Soviet Asian territories and republics compares favourably with that of U.S.A., France or Britain and the distribution of medical service among the people is a thousand times more equitable in the U.S.S.R. than in any of the capitalist countries, much still remains to be done. Public health activities include not only the prevention and cure of diseases but also the ensurance of perfect health for the citizens. Housing, diet,

[1] Leonard Barnes, *Soviet Light on the Colonies*, p. 202.

physical culture and wholesome holidays, therefore, form parts of the whole health plan, and these, though tackled much more successfully for the citizens in the Soviet Union than in other states of the world, are far from perfect. Soviet ideology accepts no given situation as perfect or static; the socialist outlook is one of progress as an unfolding process. It is characteristic of the Soviet State that public service in the Asian components of the Soviet Union has been rapidly brought up on a par with Great Russia. In the youngest of the Republics, namely, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan the ratio of doctors to the population was 1: 2,607 and 1: 2,875 respectively in 1937, while the overall ratio for the whole Union was 1: 1,300. The ratio of hospital beds to the population for the two republics was, for the same year, 1: 191 and 1: 262 respectively, as against the ratio of 1: 145 for the prosperous city of London. And the number of doctors and hospital accommodation keeps on growing rapidly every year. One great difficulty of providing sanitation and medical supervision for all citizens in Soviet Asia is the sparseness of population. In northern Siberia and portions Turkestan republics the population is so thinly scattered that it is physically impossible to extend to them the same amount of care as is possible in a crowded city or even *kolkhoz* (collective farm) areas. Possibly the tide of collectivisation of agriculture and enterprise will in the post-war period draw them into compact residential areas and obviate the difficulties.

The rapid increase in the number of doctors in the U.S.S.R. will be evident from the following table:—

	1914	1940
Physicians ...	20,000	120,000
Medical assistants ...	30,000	250,000

In no country other than the Soviet Union has there been a greater draft upon the resources of science and upon the initiative of scientific experts. A perfect fever of scientific activity sat upon the whole Union since the NEP period, and nowhere was it seen at its peak as in Siberia, and later in Central Asia. I have in a previous chapter said that the founding of a multi-

national Socialist state was not an experiment, but it was the practical demonstration of a theoretical truth complete in details. Where the experiment lay was in determining the tempo of reconstruction and in the high degree of reliance placed in the practical and technological sciences. Scientific advice has so far dominated the Soviet State in the basic matter of Socialist construction through industrialisation, agricultural organisation and settlement of men on land that it has moulded the political affairs of the Union. The political structure of the Soviet Union by no means represents its economic, therefore its living, structure; nationalities have the *right* to live apart but no *necessity* to do so. On the other hand, economic activity of a truly international character based upon perfect equality have welded the constituent nationalities into a unity which neither propaganda nor gunpowder and steel have been able to crack. Economists subserving the ends of the capitalist nations criticise this by pointing out that this makes each nation dependent on the other, destroys national independence and national cultures. Yes, but it destroys also something more. It destroys the roots of the "superior" nation vanity, the economic stranglehold on subject nations by an occupying imperialist Power and the enormous improvement in the standard of living of the ruling class among the imperialists at the expense of the deepening misery and increased sufferings of the subject peoples. Is there any other method of quickly raising the standard of living of the masses of mankind than by harnessing the power of science under conditions of Socialism?

Before the Revolution, Siberia as well as Central Asia were almost unexplored territories. The Revolution and the subsequent events, namely, the isolation of the Soviet Union from the world both economically and politically, the internal turmoils and a consciousness of the possibility of attack by the Capitalist Powers, spurred the Soviet authorities on the way to the rapid achievement of self-sufficiency and military strength. It was necessary for this that all the resources required for having plenty in both war and peace should be found—and found inside the Soviet Union; that all of them should be put to the best and the most useful purpose.

Thus scientific enterprise became the order of the day, and old and young, man and women, turned out as prospectors, explorers, inventors and organisers. Not all of them had first-rate training. Indeed, the majority of them had been hastily trained, ill-equipped and inexperienced. But they had one great asset which few of their better trained and better equipped counterparts (they do not exist as a category) in capitalist countries have—enthusiasm and the determination to make good at any cost to themselves, and to prove that the Soviet youth were as good as and better than those of any country. There were no business competitors to guard against, nor any profit-seeking financiers grumbling at the expense and the risk. Thus notwithstanding the callowness and ignorance of Soviet pioneers in scientific activity, magnificent results were achieved which could not have been achieved by any other country or under any other system.[1]

Take, for example, the Soviet activities in the Arctic Circle. The establishment of a regular sea-route between the White Sea and Behring Sea was the vain effort of explorers for two centuries before the Revolution. The northern coast of Siberia remained more of an unknown strand than a known, surveyed and mapped littoral. Arctic exploration has resulted in meteorological, aeronautical and allied research on a gigantic scale and the navigation of Siberian rivers, along which the timber wealth of the Taiga is sent down to the Arctic Sea. For nine months in the year the Arctic is unnavigable on account of ice-packs, and this prohibiting factor made it impossible for pre-Revolution Russian industry to make the export of Siberian timber to European Russia an economic proposition. The railways, which were the only alternative to the sea-way, were unable to carry the vast load; the inexhaustible wealth of timber was, therefore, untapped. "Explorers came and went, and the Arctic remained unchanged, a frozen, wind-swept, almost uninhabited tundra. Then, fifteen years ago" (the story is told in 1942) "towns began to spring up along the coast at or near the

[1] The British, for example, have a vast unexplored colonial empire in Africa. Their colonial policy, as ignorant as it is dishonest and hypocritical, offers a sharp contrast.

mouths of Siberian rivers, and the airplane, the radio and the ice-breaker began to open the Arctic to commerce and industry. Permanent polar research centres were established, seas were opened, and ports were built to accommodate ships."[1]

The story of the rise of the Lena estuary port of Igarka, which figures as one of the wonder stories of human achievement in any era, is typical of Soviet enterprise. The Arctic towns, for three-fourths of the year freezing in a temperature 40° below zero, are lighted and heated by electricity. And how? By harnessing the constant gales of the Arctic Circle with the help of windmill propellers that work innumerable dynamos. Communications are kept up with neighbours—the nearest of whom may be no less than 200 miles and headquarters about a thousand miles away—by means of the aeroplane, of which a regular and constant service is maintained. In these towns are located timber and other industries that have to do with locally available resources, and their produce is transported by ships during the brief summer.

By all calculations, life in the Arctic desert must be a fairly hard one. There must be widespread curiosity as to how people could live there, and naturally there is an equally widespread impression that residents within the tundra area must be forced to live and slave in that super-frozen hell. Yet it is a very much mistaken impression. Of course a tundra-dweller does not enjoy Nature's bounties like a Caucasian, but he is much better off, much more comfortable, than an Indian mill-worker or a Lancashire labourer or a Welsh miner or a tropical African. He has electricity, the aeroplane and the aero-sledge and roomy housing; he has plenty of cereals and meat, and fresh vegetables and fruit grown locally. Here is another triumph of Soviet science that almost outdoes the miracles of the good fairy in children's tales. It was decided to make the Arctic settlements, as far as possible, self-supporting. The greatest and most formidable barrier to the raising of any crops in the tundra was that between one winter frost and another there was only a brief summer thaw of hardly 3 months, during which

[1] R. A. Davies and A. J. Steiger, *Soviet Asia*, p. 106.

time crops could be raised, but not matured. The first experiments were very disappointing, and for a time it was feared that they must be written off as failures. But meanwhile all over the Union there was a spate of agronomic research activity; fruits, wheat and cereals of all varieties in the world were being assembled and put to tests and crossings and selections under innumerably different conditions of weather, soil, climate, fertilising and manuring. The greatest triumphs were recorded—snow-resisting crops were evolved, and most remarkable of all, a process was found by which the life-cycles of crops from sprouting to harvesting were so shortened as to be complete within the brief spell of the arctic summer. This process, known as "vernalisation" or "jacovisation", stands to the credit of a Soviet professor, Lyssenko and his colleagues and another Soviet scientist, Eichfield. The importance of this device is not confined to arctic agriculture alone but extends to the whole world. Where one crop a year has been the rule from time immemorial, vernalisation makes possible the raising of three crops. It also makes it possible for the farmer to raise three years' crops in one and spend two years out of three in the pursuit of knowledge and in scientific activities. It promises to abolish famine altogether.

The Siberians are not only growing wheat on the tundra ; they are also raising any number of fruits and vegetables natural to the temperate zone. Giant hot-houses supplied with artificial sunlight and controlled heat from electricity generated by the harnessing of the Siberian gales have been providing the residents with fresh fruit and vegetables, while cattle herds of similar dimensions and with similar equipment are providing them with meat and milk. So far, however, the results are in the stage of large-scale experiments, and optimistic scientists in the tundra hope that in the not-too-distant future it may be possible to export Arctic produce to other lands. At present the quantities produced seems to be too moderate to permit of any use other than local consumption, and the cost of production is rather higher than that further south.

The question of costs is, however, misleading for, as we have already seen, the costliest item, namely, electricity for heating and

artificial sunlight, is free. Moreover, the cost of transporting food by aeroplane from the south would certainly not have been less. Furthermore, in a society where rivalry for profit-making is absent and where production is planned solely to meet social necessity, the question of cost of production loses its customary significance. In socialist society, human activity is valued according to its socially useful functions. Money, therefore, loses the significance it has acquired in capitalist countries and becomes mainly a measure of the value of socially useful labour. It does not function as the medium of concentration and centralisation of industrial credit, and has therefore a secondary place in the economy of the Soviet Union: a dethronement, almost a desecration, of the presiding deity of Capitalism which puzzles, confuses and horrifies orthodox economists to whom the Soviet system of regulating prices is a mystery. Social effort being judged by human values, to try to find economic justification for the production of certain commodities by referring to the so-called "cost of production" is an entirely mistaken idea.

The same unflagging zeal for unearthing the secret treasures of Nature and utilising them for securing the uplift of man characterises the rapid and phenomenal development of Kazakhstan, till the October Revolution the home of nomad horsemen whom Czarist rule had been slowly but effectively liquidating by forcing out of arable land. Its vast underground wealth went unsuspected until Soviet scientists started their mission of exploration. Today Kazakhstan stands first in the Union in the mining of copper, zinc, lead, and tungsten; second in gold, molybdenum, tin and fluorspar; and third in coal and petroleum. It is probably the world's greatest source of nickel. Its 8,000 collective farms produce large quantities of wheat and rye, as also cotton, beet, rice and fruits. But perhaps the greatest discovery was that of rubber —from the roots of a species of the dandelion plant. This plant originally grew wild in the hills of the Tian-Shan range near Alma Ata. To-day it is being grown all over the Black Earth region and furnishing a high proportion of the rubber needs of the U.S.S.R. during war. Another direction in which Kazakhstan has made

considerable progress is in stock-raising, and Sempalatinsk houses one of those large meat-packing factories that have met the food requirements of not only the Soviet Union but Britain at war. Cotton and woollen textiles, wheat and dairy products, fruit-canning, rubber, tobacco, chemicals, metals and coal-tar derivatives are the other considerable industries in the Kazakh republic. The chief wonder about the place is that most of its territory was steppe and desert. "The wresting of tillable soil from he steppe and the desert of Kazakhstan has posed one of the greatst problems agricultural specialists have ever been asked to solve. The arid land is not only generally devoid of fresh water-courses, but is saturated with salts. Irrigation alone would not make the soil fertile. Desalting the soil has to be done, and where this has been successfully achieved, fruit and vegetable gardens thrive—mostly along the railway, and in the desert near Aral Sea. Even in Alma Ata, the capital, irrigation is required to make the soil produce. The streets are lined with huge shade trees watered by murmuring rivulets flowing in ditches on both sides of the streets. . . Alma Ata is truly a city of beauty, particularly in the spring, when all the apple orchards are abloom."[1] From a hamlet it has grown into a city with 250,000 people, a great university, 13 colleges, 15 technical high schools with 7000 students, museums, a picture gallery and theatres. In 1926, only 22.8 per cent of the total population of Kazakshtan (60% Kazakh, 20% Russian, 14% Ukranian, 6% others) were literate ; in 1940 nearly 77% were literate. Of a total population of 6,145,937 (1939 census) there were, in the same year, 1,102,300 pupils in schools and colleges as against the 1914 figures of 105,200. In 1914, the number of technical students was 300; in 1939 it was 24,500. In the former year, not a single student was receiving higher education because there was no college in the whole of Central Asia; in 1939, there were 7,900 such students, as also 355 research students at the University of Alma Ata, doing research work mainly in biology, physics and chemistry. As against 2 thea-

[1] R. A. Davies and A. J. Steiger, *Soviet Asia*, Pp. 72-73.

tres before the Revolution, there are now 40 national theatres and 800 cinemas. The most significant feature of all these achievements is that almost all of it has been built by the Kazakh people with the help and assistance of Russians and Ukranians.

If Kazakhstan represents the miracle of geological exploration, Uzbekistan represents that of irrigation and industrialisation. This Constituent Republic of the Soviet Union extends over 112,650 square miles, of which 48,650 square miles is taken up by the Karakalpak Autonomous Republic. The population (1939) is 6,630,000, of whom 76 per cent are Uzbeks, 10 per cent Russians and the rest Tadjiks, Kazakhs and Turcomen. It is known as the "land of White Gold"—cotton, which forms 58 per cent of the total cotton production of the U.S.S.R. Lucerne, rice, silk, jute (a new experimental crop), fruits and grape are the other main agricultural produce. Livestock raising is confined mainly to caracul sheep and goats. Its oil and coal resources have been explored and exploited to remarkable effect, the annual output of oil in 1937 being officially estimated at over 700,000 tons, most of it being refined locally. The coal reserves are estimated at 200 million tons but prospecting is not yet finished. Its copper mines are the third biggest in the U.S.S.R. and are worked and smelted by electric power obtained by harnessing the waters of the Chirchik river at a number of hydro-electric stations. Secondary agricultural machinery plants, food-packing and canning plants have been working and increasing under planning. The Stalin Textile Combinat—a group of cotton mills in Tashkent—which produces over 65 million yards of cloth per year ("enough, if used for uniforms, to clothe thirteen million soldiers"—Davies and Steiger), the big cotton mill in Fergana (47,000 spindles) and silk winding mills comprise the other industries of the Republic. But the main wonder is the irrigation that has transformed a desert into a paradise of flower and fruits. Uzbekistan is an ancient land, and one that was once a prosperous tribal-agricultural land. Its prosperity tempted invaders since Alexander the Great, and the great Tamerlane found it beautiful enough to be the resting-place for his restless soul. An industrious native population had devised an elaborate system of irrigation

for this land; but with the coming down of the Uzbeks the aborigines had been driven to the southern hills, the old system of irrigation had perished through neglect and the desert had claimed back what man had snatched from its avid encroaching hands. Yet the soil is eminently suited to the growing of cotton, rice etc., and wherever water could be found cotton grew in tempting abundance. It was this cotton wealth, incidentally, that had attracted the Czarist empire-grabbers in the later 19th century. In the economic and human uplift of Uzbekistan the expansion and maintenance of the irrigation system were a vital necessity. "Projects completed in recent years include the Dyz-Ket-Ken Canal, a navigable watercourse, irrigating nearly 175,000 acres of land; the 170-mile Fergana Canal, completed with the voluntary co-operation of 160,000 collective farmers; and the Dum-Kurgan system on the Surkhan-Darya river. A dam is now being completed in the Katta-Kurghan valley, which will impound an estimated 55,800,000 acre-feet of water, to form what is already spoken of as the "Uzbek Sea", an artificial lake of the future to be ten times larger than Boulder Dam's Lake Meade. In 1942 there was built the Northern Tashkent Canal, which is destined to irrigate 120,000 acres of fertile land now remaining idle. The project is intended to increase the output of foodstuffs."[1]

The remarkable feature of this gigantic irrigation excavation is that it was done by voluntary labour of the Uzbek people. The latest machinery and the most ancient implements, hefty men and women just out of the paranja, worked side by side to complete the canals. "When the Fergana Canal was under construction," write Davies and Steiger, "there were days when 100,000 people contributed free labour and even organised field kitchens, taking their meals picnic fashion, while native dancers and singers performed, in order not to waste time by going home to eat. The canal literally grew under them," having been built in the record time of 17 days.

Uzbekistan, it may be remembered, formed before the Revolu-

[1] R. A. Davies and A. J. Steiger, *Soviet Asia*, p. 80.

tion the major part of the Khanate of Bokhara. It was the most famed Central Asian stronghold of Muslim priesthood, who as the right hand of the oppressive feudal royalty dominated the culture of the land. In the result, the whole land was a fen of superstition, ignorance and poverty. While there was no education, literacy was mainly confined to the *mullah*-ic brotherhood, and claimed about 1 per cent of the population. Women were used like cattle and treated worse than domestic animals, being subjected to the *paranja* and absolute despotism of the male. The cultural transformation of the Uzbeks is a wonderful tribute to the scientific thoroughness of Soviet planning. Not only has literacy been universalized in course of less than 15 years, but there has been the fullest participation in it by women, who have emerged as a new and powerful force in the building of socialism. They form an important percentage of the technical personnel employed in the mills and the collectives. The hurdles they had to cross for earning their new freedom, the amount of hostility they had to suffer in the first stages of their liberation from the prison walls of their mud homes—they were enormous.[1] The last bastion of authority for the male sex is the home. Whatever romantic nonsense may have been said about the home being the woman's kingdom, economically it is the male who wields the ruling rod wherever the other sex is economically dependent upon him. Of socialist equality the basis is economic equality, and the securing of this for woman ranks as the foremost task in a revolutionary programme. Uzbek women typify in their rise to the greatest heights from the lowest depths the miracle of the new womanhood of the Soviet Union.

The Turkmen Republic (area, 188,609 sq. miles: population, 1,253,985) is mostly desert—for want of water. For centuries it has offered to men a challenge; kings have come and gone, civilisations rose and fell, but the vast desert of Kara Kum, perhaps the most desolate place on earth, has remained unconquered. It was only after the Revolution that plans to reconstruct Turkmenistan

[1] Cf. Joshua Kunitz, *Dawn Over Samarkand* and E S. Bates, *Soviet Asia*.

actually took shape. Soviet scientists have been constantly at work perfecting numerous projects for the reclamation of desert areas. Turkmenistan is the hottest and driest part of the Soviet Union. Rainfall is very scanty, and the two principal rivers, the Tejen and the Murghab, rising in Iran, lose themselves in the Kara Kum sands. Consequently, water has been as dear as gold, being measured, not by buckets, but by skull-caps. The native population industrially persevered with primitive irrigation for many centuries. But water resources have been inadequate, and in the past the river and canal waters were owned by the aristocratic families of the ruling class, so the peasant was cruelly exploited for his dear water. One of the first acts of Soviet Turkmenistan was, therefore, to nationalise water. During the last 20 years, old irrigation systems have been broadened and 1,500 hydraulic buildings installed. In the last three years 10,000 underground water springs have been located, 2,000 old wells repaired and 1,400 new ones dug. A plan has just been completed for the excavation of a vast canal system, 600 kilometres long, which will transfer the waters of the Amu Darya to the Murghab and Tejen basins and cutting across the Kara Kum desert, will end in the Caspian Sea. This may almost be compared to the legendary feat of the Indian mythological hero, Bhagiratha, who had persuaded the waters of the Ganges to irrigate the North Indian valleys. In the present case it is the ordinary people of the Union who will play that philanthropist's role. The project will extend the irrigated area by 500,000 acres and transform the desert. When completed, it will be one of the greatest achievements in river engineering in the world on account of the enormous engineering problems involved in the construction.

Besides extending irrigation, Soviet science is pursuing two other methods for the reclamation of the desert. One of them is afforestation: desert flora is studied and adapted so as to enable patches of the desert to be planted and under the influence of vegetation to permit such humidity of the surface soil as makes the growth of pasture grass possible. This is a slow process, but it is working. The second method is trench agriculture. In deserts where the soil is not excessively alkaline or saline the soil a few

feet beneath the surface generally has sufficient moisture to make plants grow. The desert planters of Turkmenitstan dig deep trenches into the ground with sloping sides and plant crops in the trench beds. Such trench farms yield "incredible" quantities of vegetables and root crops[1] because under the layer of ever-shifting sand lies a rich loam that, if successfully watered, can produce nearly the whole wide range of sub-tropical vegetation.

Nearly half of the cultivated area of Turkmenistan is devoted to cotton-growing, total production of which is planned to reach 354,000 tons by 1946, *i.e.*, before the Kara Kum Canal project is through. The remaining portion, a little over half the total area, grows food-grains reared either in summer or in winter according to water supply in the particular localities. Where water is scarce, it can be spared only when it is not needed for other and more economic crops, and this happens to be the winter season. Where it is more plentiful and crops are easier grown and more abundantly harvested, the grains are grown in summer. Other crops are lucerne for cattle fodder that alternates with cotton; pistachio nuts, fruits, rubber and silk. The livestock, reared on the reclaimed desert pastures, consists mainly of sheep, goats and horses and runs to several million heads.

The oil industry of Turkmenistan is young, but it has already made considerable progress since 1932. The output of the Neftedag wells and refinery is daily growing, and as far back as 1938, it had already been supplying 6 per cent of the total oil requirements of the Union. Coal is an infant industry in the Republic, the first mine being sunk in 1940. The chemical industry has been much developed on the shores of the Kara-Bugaz Bay, a dead arm of the Caspian Sea, where there is a vast deposit of sodium sulphate (Glauber's salt). These deposits are said to be the largest in the world and consequently there is already a great output—and it has been rapidly growing—of sulphates, iodine, bromides and sulphuric acid. Vast deposits of sulphur in the south-east and in the centre of the Kara Kum desert are also being turned to chemical

[1] Cf. Davies and Steiger, *Soviet Asia*, p. 86.

use, and new industrial colonies are rising in these desolate areas which have become beehives of activity. Cotton manufactures, silk-weaving, woollens, cement, glass and machine-tool making are being carried on in Ashkabad, Cherjui and Merv.

Before the Revolution, Turkmenistan had a literacy of about 7 in 1000. Today it has exceeded 700 in 1000, and cultural agencies like colleges, schools, libraries, clubs, theatres and cinema houses are growing in number.

Tadjikistan, the nearest Soviet Republic to the northern frontier of India, is separated from the inaccessibly mountainous region of Gilgit by a narrow strip of Afghan territory about 9 miles wide. The Tadjik national area, which was separated from the Bokhara S. R. in 1924 and formed first into an Autonomous Republic and in 1929 into a full-fledged Union Republic, does not comprise all the Tadjiks. The greater number of them are contained in Afghanistan. It is a land of high altitudes, containing as it does the highest peaks of the Pamir ranges, as also the Pamir tableland, called "the roof of the world." From south to north the land slopes down, and while the mountain areas are arctic in climate the valleys are sub-tropical. Forests dot the foothills and wild life is abundant. The southern portion, for eleven years since 1920 the scene of Basmach activity, was till the other day practically cut off from the world. It was the region where Tadjik peasants had to fly from the persecutions of the Uzbek ruling class. "So recent has been its (Tadjikistan's) awakening that it may truly be called the world's youngest modern State. Thus in mountains, roads and people we reach the superlative. There is no other way to describe this part of the world."[1] "From the point of view of today," writes Bates, "it is at once a shop window and a strategic point of the U.S.S.R."[2] The good Bates is haunted by "the nearness of Tadjikistan to India" and finds "a special point" in this fact for inflated Soviet propaganda of achievements in this republic. It does not strike him that the people of Tadjikistan were one of

[1] R. A. Davies and A. J. Steiger, *Soviet Asia*, p. 90.
[2] E. S. Bates, *Soviet Asia*, p. 106.

the most backward peoples on earth and that if in a decade or two social services almost on the scale of Great Britain have been successfully extended to them without, of course, injecting culture among each and every person in the same degree as a Cambridge graduate, it is an object lesson that will sooner or later—and whether it is situated next door to India or next door to Britain—draw comparisons with the British Imperial policy in India and the colonies, and dab it with the taint of criminality. An Englishman generally sees with his purse; Bates may be forgiven and forgotten.

Tadjikistan was an agricultural land of a very primitive type. The absence of roads, the ignorance and poverty of the people, the fanaticism of the mullahs, the depredations of the neo-Basamachi, the national question—all combined to make its regeneration a very complicated problem. "What made this place so alluring," said Sluchak, a Bolshevik working in Tadjikistan to Joshua Kunitz in 1931, "is that the struggle here is extraordinarily intense —extraordinary even in the Soviet Union. . . . You can gauge the effect of the Revolution and the Basmach movement on the life of the people by the fact that at the end of the Civil War Eastern Bokhara had lost 72 per cent of the sown area, over 60 per cent of the cattle, and 25 per cent of the population. There was a great exodus of the more prosperous peasant families. 206,000 people (43,000 peasant housholds) with stocks and cattle and implements migrated to Afghanistan. We found here a completely devastated country, and we have been striving to transform it in as brief a time as possible—and despite all the Ibrahim Beks—into a highly mechanised, collectivised, and industrialised centre of Egyptian cotton."[1]

Sluchak's dream has been amply fulfilled. Tadjikistan is not only the Soviet Union's great base for Egyptian cotton, it is also the chief source of Central Asia's electric power and is the most completely collectivised Republic of the Union. Its 3,862 collectives cover almost 100 per cent of the area sown, and for the fractional percentage of the individual tillings it is not want of the

[1] Joshua Kunitz, *Dawn Over Samarkand*, Pp. 218-19.

co-operative spirit, but of colonists that is manly accountable. For its area of 56,500 square miles it is sparsely populated ; the inhabitants number only 1,490,000, of which nearly a quarter live in industrial areas. The progress of mechanisation in this republic is not far short of being miraculous in view of the great backwardness of the people till 1929. If the inherent capacity of the lowliest underdog to imbibe culture as quickly as the "curled darlings" under conditions of actual equality needs a demonstration, it is provided by the Tadjiks.[1] Till 1931 Tadjikistan had not seen a wheeled carriage; in 1939 it had 48 tractor stations serving the collectives, operating 4,000 tractors and a thousand lorries.

Tadjikistan is not self-supporting in food-crops; nor is it intended under Soviet planning that it should be so. The whole of Soviet Central Asia is an economic unit and the needs and requirements of this region are met by a co-ordination and planning of production and equity of distribution. In the broader sense, the whole Union is a vast economic and social unit. But the practical limitations of big-scale continental planning must be apparent. It requires infinitely more improved means of transport than has been possible till now at an economic cost. Besides, the revolutionary improvements in agriculture that have been taking place in the modern world—of which Soviet agronomists are the leading pioneers—promise to make food crops, fruits, vegetables and animal food possible of growth in any climate regardless of soil, so that in the not-too-distant future no country need be dependent upon another for its food. Whether you have caviare or stale bread for dinner does not depend on the climate so much

[1] For a confirmation of inherent ability, reference may be made to the following news item circulated by the *Associated Press of India* on April 16, 1945: "Agra, April 16.—Boys between the ages of 14 and 16, picked at random from the Agra bazars, have been trained by the Indian Electrical and Mechanical Engineers as instrument mechanics and are now working in the air-conditioned workshops of Central Command at Agra. These IEME workshops form part of a plant devoted to the repair and reconditioning of almost every scientific and precision instrument in use by a modern army."

as upon your purse; and the collectivist Tadjik has a long purse to-day, so well has "white gold" paid him. Yet rice, wheat, barley etc. are grown wherever possible and wherever cotton does not stake a claim. Fruits there are in profusion, and a canning industry has grown up in the fertile valleys. Livestock should have been richer, but it is not an agricultural industry in the republic and is still mostly individual property.

Like Uzbekistan, Tadjikistan, too, produces some petroleum. There are two fields, the KIM (meaning Young Communist International) and the Neftabad. The output, though not yet considerable, is almost enough to cover the cotton industry needs of the republic, though it would have been quite inadequate to run that industry if it had not been greatly helped by the republic's own electric power. The metal resources hidden in the mines had not been explored till recently, but the Pamir foothills were from ancient times known to possess gold, silver and lead. Recent explorations in uninhabited and difficult areas have led to the discovery of bismuth, arsenic, tungsten, zinc, tin, uranium, radium, fluorspar etc. Prospecting is still in its infancy, so to say ; a very large area still remains to be explored. The hillsides are used for pasture, and Soviet geologists have been training shepherds to recognise metallic ore. "Recently Tadjik shepherds discovered rich deposits of non-ferrous metals high in the Pamirs. Hundreds of peasants came in, braving mountain blizzards, to get mining operations started. One camp was set up in ten days, and mining machinery was brought to it by plane and on the backs of camels so that work could begin at once. Meanwhile, a railway spur was begun from a main line to the mine."[1] That is the typical Soviet spirit in Central Asia.

We come now to the great hydro-electric development in Tadjikisan. The river system of the republic mainly consists of mountain streams feeding the Amu-Darya. There is no lack of water, but its flow is inconstant, and much of it was, therefore,

[1] R. A. Davies and A. J. Steiger, *Soviet Asia*, p. 90.

not available for use on account of want of dams and reservoirs. Soviet planners reckoned that if this water were harnessed, it would produce not less than 30 million horsepower and irrigate not only the whole republic but also a part of Uzbekistan. By 1941 there were 57 hydro-electric stations, including the famous Varsobstroi and Vakhshstroi stations. These supply nearly half of the effective hydro-electric power in Central Asia. The same operation that harnesses water for power also does so for agriculture, and the result is that the breaking of virgin soil has been a continuous process.

But the most striking progress that has been made is in the matter of communication. Till 1929, Tadjikistan had no roads, no railways, no air service. The Turkestan-Siberian Railway, a 4000-mile loop on the Trans-Siberian Railway, does not enter Tadjikistan. But at present, a number of excellent motor roads join the Tadjik centres of industry and mining to the Turk-Sib on numerous points, and a branch of the Trans-Caspian Railway connects Stalinabad, the capital and most important city, with Termez. The mountainous terrain makes railway construction difficult and circuitous, not to say expensive and incapable of handling heavy goods traffic. Branch railways projected and already in course of construction are, therefore, of the "light" or narrow-gauze type. Trunk communication has to be maintained by regular airways services from one important point to another, with their centre at Stalinabad (former Dushambe). Great progress has been made in road -building and there are few localities which cannot be reached by motor car, there being over 4,000 miles of trunk roadway alone. Of particular importance is the Great Pamir Road, connecting Stalinabad with Khorog, high up in the tablelands of Pamir. It is said to be the world's highest road, running as it does across the undulating 13,000 ft. high plateau. As a feat of engineering and a monument of success of collective endeavour, this 468-mile road can be compared with the Fergana Canal. There are two other trunk roads, one connecting Khorog with Osh in Pamir, and the other connecting the south of the republic with the north at Stalinabad.

Side by side with economic improvement, there has been a remarkable cultural recovery. From a literacy of 3.7 per cent in 1926, it rose to 71.7 per cent in 1939. Four universities flourish where there was none. 425 libraries, 700 clubs, 17 newspapers and 22 theatres and many institutions of Fine Arts have arisen in the course of a little over a decade.

The last but not the least important Union Republic of Central Asia, Kirghizia stands on the road between U.S.S.R. and China. It is the most ancient inhabited land, peopled by a proud freedom-loving people who gave the Czar's men no end of trouble and suffered no end of miseries as a consequence. Yet it is a curious fact that the Kirghiz did not possess an alphabet of their own. The Uzbek overlords of these primitive peasants kept their culture to themselves, and the Revolution found them as backward as the Tadjiks. The countryside partakes of the mountainous character of Tadjikistan as well as plains on the Uzbek and Kazakh frontiers. Its 94,000 square miles of territory are inhabited by about 1,500,000 people of whom 66 per cent are Kirghiz, 11 per cent Uzbek (mostly residing in the Kirghiz section of the Fergana valley), 11 per cent Chinese Muslim and 6 per cent Ukrainian. Kirghizia has been called the "historic stokehold of Central Asia", so great is the wealth of coal found in the republic. The output in 1936 was a million tons and in 1939 it was 38 per cent more, due to the discovery of new fields. Exploration is, however, by no means complete, and by 1942 new seams and better organised mining raised the output to above 2 million tons. The petroleum industry is new, having started only in 1940 near Jalalabad. Mercury, antimony, tin, lead, arsenic, iridium, gold, sulphur, wolfram, molybdenum, tungsten and radium constitute the major minerals worked.[1] Kirghizia is a land of mountain pastures, the proportion of the sown area to grazing ground being 1:12. Most of the tilled land is sown with grains and cotton and excellent harvests are raised with the help of irrigation on lines similar to those of Tadjikistan.

[1] Davies and Steiger report that "of the ninety-two known elements, sixty have so far been discovered in Kirghizia in commercial quantities." —*Soviet Asia*, p. 94.

Production of sugar-beet is expanding and sugar refineries in Kant and Karabalta have been turning out 25,000 tons daily during season. Tobacco-growing is the other agricultural occupation. As in Tadjikistan, irrigation plays a most important part in agriculture. Part of the Fergana Canal falls within this republic. The Naryu Canal, the Chu Valley canal system, the Ugarsk and Otuz-Adarsky canals are the other notable irrigation works. Sheep-farming on the pasture land is increasing apace and Kirghizia has been supplying the Union not only with meat, but also horses for the Red Army. Industrial development is on the same lines as Tadjikistan.

The cultural improvement is no less remarkable than in any other republic of the Union. "Until a few years ago there was no written alphabet of the Kirghiz language; the great majority of the people was illiterate. Today the Kirghiz have an alphabet, and in 1939 there were 20,000 pupils in the republic's 1,500 elementary schools, 119 high schools, and three universities. More than 20,000 teachers gave instruction in the native language from books printed in the new alphabet."[1]

A table showing the progress of education in Soviet Central Asia is given at the end of this chapter.

"One of the great lessons to be learnt from the Central Asians," say Davies and Steiger, "is that, with the aid of friendly people more advanced industrially, an economically backward people can progress directly and rapidly to the age of the machine, the radio and the aeroplane." Another and a greater lesson is that it is the common people, the peasant, the labourer and the nomad shepherd who have taken the lead in the achievement of the great transformation.

R A. Davies and A. J. Steiger, *Soviet Asia*, p. 96.

THE PROGRESS OF EDUCATION IN SOVIET CENTRAL ASIA

KAZAKHSTAN

All pupils	1914	105,200	1938-39	1,102,300
Students in technical schools	,,	300	,,	24,500
Higher education students ...	,,	0	,,	7,900
Theatres	,,	2	1940	35
Percentage of literacy ..	1926	22·8	1939	76·3

UZBEKISTAN

All pupils	1914	17,000	1940	1,300,000
Students in technical schools	,,	100	1938-39	212,000
Higher education students ...	,,	0	,,	18,300
Libraries	1922	22	1940	1,500
City & village Clubs ...	1914	0	,,	2,500
Theatres	,,	1	,,	44
Percentage of literacy ...	1926	10.6	1939	67·8

TURKMENISTAN

Schools of all types ...	1914	58	1938-39	1,347
All pupils	,,	6,783	,,	205,000
Technical Schools . ..		0	,,	38
Students in technical schools	,,	0	,,	38
Higher education students ...	,,	0	,	6,000
Libraries	1922	14	1940	550
City and Village Clubs ...	1914	0	,,	670
Theatres	,,	0	,,	10
Percentage of literacy . .	1926	12·5	1939	67·2

TADJIKISTAN

All pupils	1914	400	1940	312,000
Students in technical schools	,,	0	1938-39	36,000
Higher education students ...	,,	0	,,	1,400
Libraries	1922	0	1940	425
City and Village Clubs ...	1914	0	,,	700
Theatres	,,	0	,,	22
Percentage of literacy ...	1926	3·7	1939	71·7

KIRGHIZIA

All pupils	1914	7,000	1940	328,700
Number of schools ...	,,	107	1938-39	1,760
Students in technical schools	,,	0	,,	3,800
Higher education students . .	,,	0	,,	1,500
Libraries	1922	34	1940	350
City and Village Clubs ...	1914	0	,,	400
Theatres	,,	0	,,	19
Percentage of literacy ...	1926	15·1	1939	70

CHAPTER XIV

TRUSTEESHIP UNDER SOCIALISM

In the foregoing chapters we dealt with the solution of the Nationalities question by the method of Socialism in Central Asia. The peoples of that region were industrially backward, but most of them had a rich legacy of native art and culture and merely needed guidance in the first steps to socialism in order to catch up with the more industrialised Great Russian nationality. The main problem in the Central Asian republics was the transformation of a feudal-agricultural society into socialist-industrial without undergoing the intermediate stage of capitalist industrialisation. But there were small minorities in Siberia that had not yet reached the feudal-agricultural state and lived nomadic tribal-pastoral lives. These minorities are about 26 in number, chief among whom are the Buryats, the Tungus, the Yakuts and the Ostyaks, all mainly descended of Mongolian stock but possessing great variety in language, religion and habitation. The Socialist problem regarding them was how to transform a primitive social order into the most modern without touching at feudalism and capitalism. Here, then, was the stiffest test set for the Bolsheviks. It is not possible within the compass of this short volume to go into details about all the primitive tribes, but we will take the case of the Buryats to illustrate the Bolshevik way of dealing with submerged peoples and settling the question of "trusteeship".

The Buryats, who for centuries have lived in Eastern Siberia south-east of Lake Baikal, are ethnically and by language related to the Mongolians. At the Revolution they were nomads moving about the country in their leather-covered wagons. "There was one *lama* for every three adult Buryats. . . Czarist officials were not at all concerned with improving the situation. In fact, they seem to have done their best to eliminate the Buryats as a people."[1]

[1] R. A. Davies and A. J. Steiger, *Soviet Asia*, p. 140.

"They were far more superstitious even than the Russian peasant, let alone the Russian industrial worker. They never washed from birth to death, or even took off their clothes ; the lamas forbade it. They could read no writing, Russian or Mongol. They knew nothing of machinery. They had scarcely any music or art; the lamas forbade all acting and almost all music except in the Buddhist celebrations. They were riddled with disease, especially tuberculosis and syphilis—although their country has a curative climate like that of Switzerland. Compared with the people of Russia, the Buryats knew nothing and had nothing. The growth of life depends on the growth of knowledge and the ability to use it, and the Buryats lived far less than the Russians. They passed from birth to death through a miserable existence, but they did not understand this existence and could make little of it."[1]

Such were the people on whom the Bolsheviks imposed their strategy of freedom as soon as the Japanese had withdrawn their military occupation after the War of Intervention. By the end of 1923, the Buryat-Mongol Autonomous Republic had been established in the area in which the Buryats were herded. This freedom represented to the Buryats, buried in the ignorance of centuries and absolutely without national or racial consciousness, "partly only a formal change. Many Buryats simply did not know and could not understand that this was as much their Republic as the Russians', that it was they who must govern it and develop it—that in doing so they would be governing and developing themselves."[2] The civil war and Japanese occupation had reduced the agricultural area by one-third and the livestock in the same proportion. And it was under these difficult circumstances that Buryatia became an Autonomous Republic within the R.S.F.S.R. The standard-bearers of the so-called Western civilisation would have given them —not freedom, but the status the British have given to the natives of South Africa or Rhodesia. The Bolsheviks, however, had implicit faith in the infinite capacity of Man to improve himself, and gave them themselves to rule.

[1] G. D. R. Phillips, *Dawn In Siberia*, p. 142.

[2] Ibid., p. 143.

The Buryats had practically no idea of running a state. Their sole experience was of clan life under alien domination and a combined process of being exploited, oppressed and treated like cattle. It took the Communist Party much pains and some years to make their freedom real to them. Of course, it was freedom on a pattern in which the Communist Party believes, and not on the pattern these ignorant nomads would have liked. This is a point made much use of by capitalist-imperialist critics of the Soviet regime. These persons easily get into the habit of thinking that all patterns of freedom except their own are static; once you start as a monarchy or a republic you remain eternally stamped with that pattern. But all freedom is dynamic. It is a continuous process of liberation that evolves new and ever newer patterns and ever widening social emancipation. The Buryats might have had no choice when the Soviet type of freedom was placed in their hands. In fact, their colossal ignorance precluded their exercising any discretion. But what subjugated people would have rejected freedom even if it were to be on a particular pattern? Moreover, in the exercise of their powers the Buryats would soon be—as they really were—competent critics of their own social organisation, and they could have changed their government, if they so liked, to a different form and content. That no ex-colony of Czarist Russia has done so is testimony enough of the reality and satisfying scope of socialist freedom.

It was natural, in the circumstances, that the Great Russians, who formed the bulk of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union at the beginning, should guide the organisation of the new-born republic. Their first and foremost task was to make worthy citizens out of the Buryats, and the transformation they have worked out in less than a quarter of a century is marvellous, if not miraculous. From a tribal-pastoral land it has become an industrial-agricultural land. Its industrial output has increased sixty times in two decades. The capital, Ulan Ude, has become one of the biggest industrial centres of the Union. Its locomotive industry produces armoured trains and heavy tanks for the Far Eastern Red Army, its glass industry produces 25,000 tons of glass

annually, its meat packing industry produces 25 million tins of tinned meat, its flour mills turn out large quantities of flour, its tungsten industry handles one of the world's largest deposits of the metal. Gold, silver, molybdenum, mica, manganese and coal are the other principal minerals worked in the republic. A vast wealth of timber and livestock completes the tally. Where barely a generation back the nomads grazed their cattle strings of prosperous collective farms have arisen. The centuries-old tradition of wandering and vagabondage has been laid to rest. The making of Man has been gloriously accomplished.

The above is a record of achievements of a Party that does not believe in the trusteeship by a nation, race or class of another or in the innate capacity or right of any nation or class to rule over the destinies of another. There are nations that do believe such things, and the greatest of them are the British. They have a colonial empire that covers nearly a fifth of the world, and they carry their profitable White Man's Burden among as bewildering a variety of nations as the Soviet Union comprises. For a comparison, let us have a look at the British colonial empire in Africa, in particular Kenya and Rhodesia. What great achievement have the British got to their credit there? Let us quote Dr. Norman Leys:

> "What, in an uncivilised country with over 3,000,000 inhabitants, would some 20,000 people from a civilised country do, in order to get power over the lives of the 3,000,000 and to gain wealth from the exercise of their power? First, they would take as much political power as their country would allow them. A franchise law that discriminated, so as to give every single one of them the vote and to refuse it to everyone of the 3,000,000, would be very useful for that purpose.[1] Second, they would induce the Government to take possession of all the land in the country, give back to the 3,000,000 what they needed for self-support, and give them (the Europeans)

[1] In Southern Rhodesia, for example, almost every European has a vote, but of the 1,250,000 natives only 58 are on the roll. In the Union of South Africa, its 7,000,000 natives have no franchise.

what was worth having of the rest. Third, they would concert with the Government measures that would enable standard wage rates to be fixed high enough to enable the 3,000,000 to pay as much as possible of the revenue from taxes, but no higher, so that as far as possible, they would escape taxation themselves. Fourth, they would get the Government to make laws that gave it power to shut any school it pleased, and stop any man it pleased from teaching, to restrict what the children of the 3,000,000 were taught to matters that suited them, to the exclusion of matters that might excite results in, and result in, protests against their situation. Fifth and last, they would inculcate among their countrymen at home the belief that the 3,000,000 belonged to a race that lacked the full human endowment. And these, together with many other subsidiary measures, are precisely what our countrymen resident in the Rhodesias as well as in Kenya have done."[1]

Instances need not be multiplied to illustrate or explain the beauties of imperialist trusteeship. Every Indian, groaning under the heavy beneficence of the White Man's Burden, feels them in his marrow. Every observer, who has looked at Malaya and Burma or has seen the pitiful tangle the British "trustees" have made of India during this war, must have had an idea of the size of the great good results of this trusteeship swindle on democracy. It is amusing and at the same time pathetic to find the profiteers on the colour bar and the continued enforced degradation of the natives of colonial empires weeping over the so-called oppression of the kulaks by the Bolshevik government of the Soviet republics.

Let us, however, get back to our point. The socialist principle of trusteeship is a direct negation of the imperialist principle. While the latter lives and thrives upon the practical enforcement of the dominating nation's or classes' assumption of superiority

[1] Dr. Normen Leys, *The Colour Bar in East Africa*, quoted in Alexander Campbell's *Empire In Africa*, p. 86.

to the ruled nations, the former lives and thrives upon the practical enforcement of the assumption that no nation or class has the right to rule over another, that no nation or class is fundamentally inferior to another and that it is the task of the more advanced nation to give every possible help to the less advanced in order to universalise knowledge, efficiency and culture. In the earlier chapters we have traced the manner in which they approached their trust—the making of Man. On the whole, that manner was thorough, self-critical and absolutely honest; and because it was consistently self-critical at every step it was saved from deviating into the bloody channels of mutually conflicting ultra-nationalist impertinence. The word *Communist* or *Bolshevik* does not by itself confer on those who pin that word on their lapels the qualities of humanity, pity and humility ; it is a word that has suffered heavily from colourable, thin and entirely spurious imitations outside Russia. Yet these qualities are indispensable elements in the make-up of a true Communist, and Communism in its fundamental insistence on service approaches the status of a religion. Marxism, it is true, does not provide for a God nor therefore for races, classes, sects or individuals favoured of the Lord. Yet there have been religions that have not postulated an anthropomorphous God or a divine hierarchy, religions that have laid the main stress on the business of social living. Communism has its ministers—the Communists. Only it has no priestly class. Its backbone is Everyman so long as he is prepared to give himself to the service of the community.

To be endowed with superior qualities and at the same time place oneself genuinely and sincerely on the same level as the average person; to be conscious of one's own superiority and yet feel an intense zeal to raise others less fortunate to one's own pedestal—this is a Communist's task. Those who have considered this human aspect of Communism find a strong likeness between Marxism and essential Christianity. This is not the White Man's Burden but the burden of the Cross, and the heaviest burden it has been the fortune of man to bear.

Unremitting self-criticism, it has been mentioned above, has

been characteristic of the Bolsheviks of the Soviet Union. Stalin, in particular, has stressed time and again that to allow the faintest trace of the superior-nation feeling within the Party is to betray the Socialist Revolution and is a defeat of Socialism. This feeling, as we know, took two forms—namely, Great-Russian chauvinism and local nationalism. In the earlier stages of the Soviet regime the majority of the members of the Bolshevik Party were Great-Russians. Some of them genuinely believed that to bring about a fusion of the diverse nationalities into one single whole and convert all languages into one common language was an immediate task of Socialism as soon as the nationalities in the Soviet Union had been liberated and put on their feet. Unless and until the nationalities concerned elected to demand it such unification would be an imposition of the Great-Russian preferences on them, and would be as much an interference with their freedom as was being practised under the Czars in the holy name of civilisation. As late as in 1930 Stalin had to sternly rebuke the upholders of "the single and indivisible" for this attempt at Russification. It was true, he admitted, that in course of time, after Socialism had been established all over the world, there would be a universal culture as the result of free, unfettered and unbiassed intercourse among nations just as there would be all over the world not only a single class but a single nation. But, as Lenin himself had said, such a situation would not evolve until a very long time after the establishment of Socialism on a world scale. One language is as good as another and one nationality as good as another. "What is national culture under the dictatorship of the proletariat? A culture *socialist* in content and national in form, the aim of which is to educate the masses in the spirit of internationalism and to consolidate the dictatorship of the proletariat."

This policy of multi-national organisation of a Socialist State —hateful to capitalist-imperialist critics and frequently perverted by them to be used both against Socialism and Stalin as occasion demanded—is in reality the foundation-stone of the unbreakable unity of the Soviet Union. The Constitution of 1936, the greatest

landmark in the story of human emancipation, embodies the following Article on the rights of nationalities:

> Article 123. *The equality of the rights of citizens of the U. S. S. R. irrespective of their nationality and race, in all fields of economic, state, cultural, social and political life, is an irrevocable law.*
>
> *Any direct or indirect restriction of these rights, or conversely, the establishment of direct or indirect privilege for citizens on account of race and nationality to which they belong, as well as any propagation of racial or national exceptionalism or hatred and contempt is punishable by law.*

Of course, a formal recognition of equality does not confer actual equality. In the British Empire there is formal equality as between one citizen and another, say for example, between a Lancashire magnate and a South African native, but in practice there are differences in status that smack of Hitler's *herrenvolk* ideology. The Soviet Union has achieved real equality among its constituents. What the extent of this equality was by the time the 1936 Constitution was put up for approval by the representatives of the nations may be best described in the words of Stalin himself:

> "As you know, within the Soviet Union there are sixty nations, national groups and nationalities. The Soviet State is a multi-national state. Clearly, the question of the relations among the peoples of the U.S.S.R. cannnot but be one of prime importance for us.
>
> "The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, as you know, was formed in 1922, at the first Congress of the Soviet of the U.S.S.R. It was formed on the principles of equality and voluntary affiliation of the peoples of the U.S.S.R. The constitution now in force, adopted in 1924, was the first constitution of the U.S.S.R. That was the period when the relations among the peoples had not yet been properly adjusted, when survivals of distrust towards the Great-Russians had not yet disappeared, and when centrifugal forces still continued to operate. Under those conditions it was necessary

to establish fraternal co-operation among the peoples on the basis of economic, political, military and mutual aid by uniting them in a single, federated, multi-national state. The Soviet Government could not but see the difficulties of this task. It had before it the unsuccessful experiments of multi-national states in bourgeois countries. It had before it the experiment of old Austria-Hungary, which ended in failure. Nevertheless, it resolved to make the experiment of creating a multi-national state for it knew that a multi-national state which has arisen on the basis of socialism is bound to stand any and every test.

"Since then fourteen years have elapsed—a period long enough to test the experiment. And what do we find? This period has shown beyond a doubt that the experiment of forming a multi-national state based on Socialism has been completely successful. This is the undoubted victory of the Leninist national policy.

"*How is this victory to be explained?*

"The absence of exploiting classes, which are the principal organisers of strife between nations;

the absence of exploitation, which cultivates mutual distrust and kindles nationalist passions;

the fact that power is in the hands of the working class, which is the foe of all enslavement and the true vehicle of the ideas of internationalism;

the actual practice of mutual aid among the peoples in all spheres of economic and social life; and finally,

the flourishing national culture of the peoples of the U.S.S.R., culture which is nationalist in form and socialist in content;

all these and similar factors have brought about a radical change in the aspect of the peoples of the U.S.S.R.; their feeling of mutual distrust has disappeared, a feeling of mutual friendship has developed among them, and thus real fraternal co-operation among the peoples has been established within the system of a single federated state.

As a result, we now have a fully formed multi-national socialist state, which had stood all tests, and whose stability might well be envied by any national state in any part of the world."

In 1936, Stalin announced that the multi-national state had "stood all tests." Yes, it had stood the unprecedented birth-pains of Socialism through the ruins and debris of a feudal imperialism. It had held in the face of attacks from within and without. It had grown through civil war and intrigues. But the biggest test was yet to come. This was the supreme test of the war which has just ended in a complete victory for the Soviet Union and the Allies. The Soviet East lay far from the battle zone, the apparent danger being a potential one from the Far East. The targets of Hitler's attack were Great Russia, the Ukraine and the Caucasus. Had there been any dissatisfaction on the part of the Asiatic republics of the Union, it is clear that they would have taken advantage of the moment when the European portions of the Union lay under the echoing boots of the marching armies of the Fascists to sever themselves from the U.S.S.R. and bring about the fall of the Socialist state.

But the Eastern republics reacted in a different manner altogether. In addition to keeping ready the Far Eastern Red Army, a giant whose strength lies veiled in mystery, yet whose very name strikes the Japanese with fear and concern, they supplied the Western Red Army not only with materials but men, received millions of evacuees and housed the industries that were removed from the West to the East. Indeed, so striking were the unity and the co-operation received from the sixty-odd different peoples that Stalin was enabled to make the claim that "the friendship among the peoples of our country has stood the test of all hardships and trials of the war and has been still further cemented in the common struggle all the Soviet peoples are waging against the fascist invaders."[1]

[1] J. Stalin, *Speech on the 26th Anniversary of the October Revolution*, Nov. 6, 1943.

The strength of the unity was further demonstrated in February, 1944 when an amendment to the Soviet constitution was adopted, vesting the constituent Republics with the power of conducting their foreign affairs and having an army for each Republic. Introducing the amendment, Molotov pointed out that this reorganisation "not only does not run counter to the interests of strengthening our Union, but on the contrary, is being introduced with the object and purpose of further strengthening our great State." "The recognition of the growing requirements of the Republics in state development, including activities in the sphere of foreign affairs, and the legislative satisfaction of these needs," he added, "will only serve to strengthen the fraternal relations between the peoples of our country, and still more fully reveal to the peoples of the East and West the historical significance of the existence of the Soviet Union." One point in the significance hinted at by M. Molotov is that it marks a further triumph of the Soviet policy on nationalities: "This new step towards the solution of the national question in the U.S.S.R. is also of great significance for progressive mankind as a whole. . . This step of the Soviet Government," Molotov further added, "will be another moral and political blow at fascism and its misanthropic policy, which is utterly inimical to the interests of the free national development of the peoples." Fascism was being beaten in the field of war but "must also secure its utter moral and political defeat." The amendment to the Soviet Constitution, besides being a demonstration of the unbreakable unity of the Soviet nationalities, was a weapon for securing the collapse of fascism and, as Sir Bernard Pares suggests, may be a pointer to the settlement of the question of national territories after the war.[1] I may add that the Soviet example will be of inestimable value in settling the question of the small and backward States.

To conclude this brief and somewhat straggling discussion: the Soviet East offers as close a parallel to the vast Indian subcontinent as any two lands can ever offer. No two countries, no

[1] Sir Bernard Pares, *Russia and the Peace*.

two events, no two times can be exactly similar. Even two peas differ considerably from each other. But Soviet Asia at the Revolution and India today offer similar complexities of nationalities, economic conditions and cultural backwardness. Sectarian nationalism and distorted class antagonism are rife; the clear-cut lines of geographical nationalism, some time ago derided as provincialism, have not yet emerged through the superficial layers of religious and political conflicts. The struggle for political emancipation is on, and the stronger it grows the greater is the repression by the imperialist British Power. In the course of the struggle new nationalities, and new national demands on behalf of those submerged nationalities, are coming to light. There is consciousness of the need of defining aims and objectives, ways and means. Those who do not regard material things of the earth as earthy and too insignificant to be worth striving for must look towards Soviet Asia for guidance and inspiration. Socialism, it may be argued, does not provide the final answer to the world's problems. But nothing else does, and no other system looks so far forward as Socialism does. History is not static nor is social equilibrium a static condition of the productive forces. We march from one stage to another, from misery to happiness and from happiness to greater happiness. What is necessary is not that we produce the perfect State or the perfect plan at one stroke, but that we keep on the right road towards ending the sordid chapter of human oppression, misery, want and fear and establishing social justice and democracy. On this note I close.

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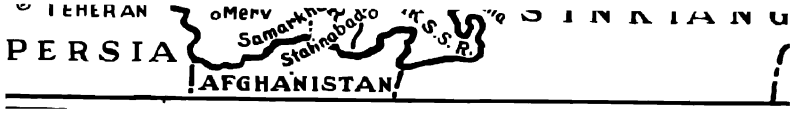

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